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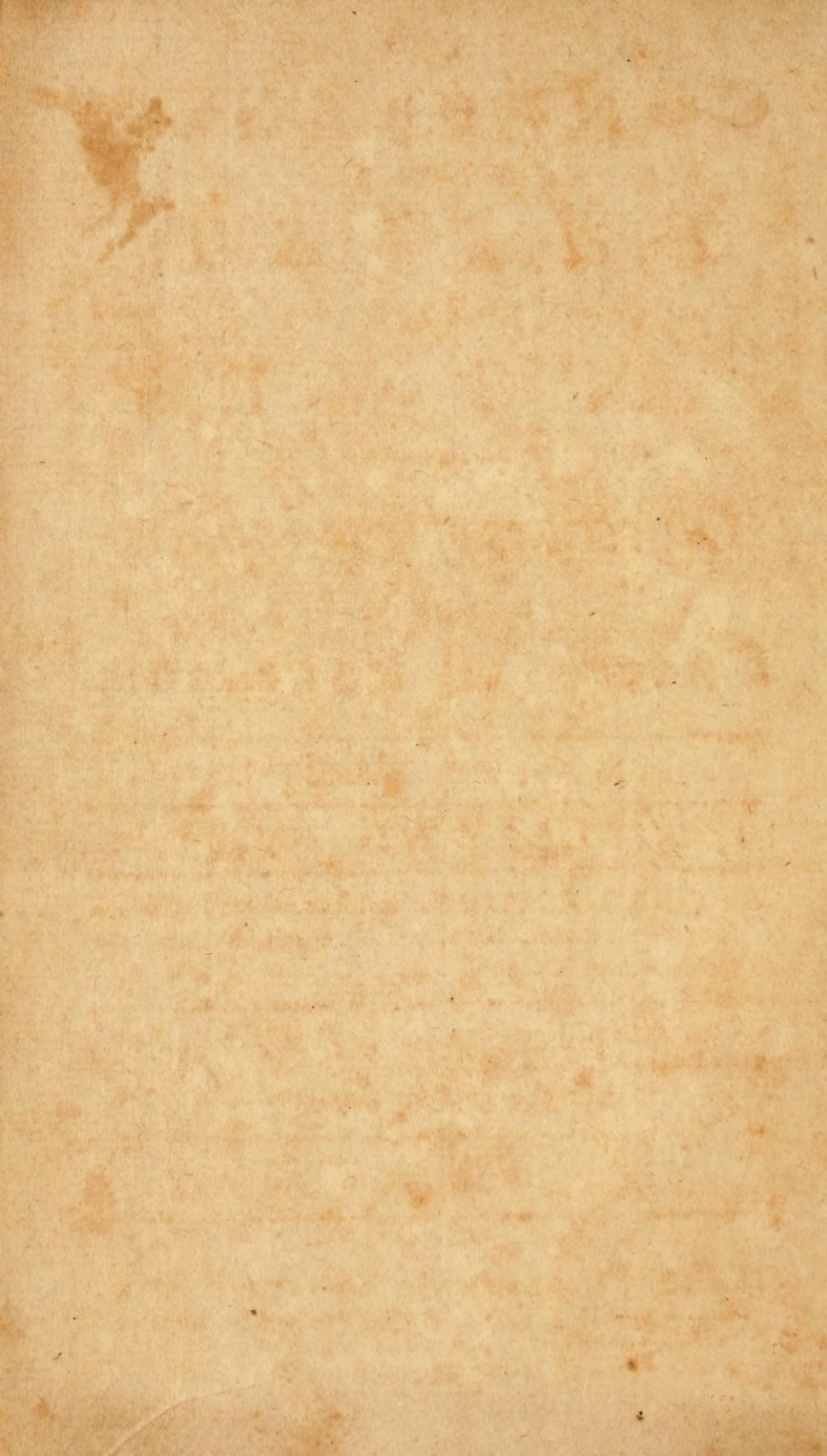
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Section 1909

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CONFERENCE
WITH A
THEIST;
Containing an
ANSWER
To all the most usual
Objections of the Infidels
Against the
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

In FIVE PARTS.

By WILLIAM NICHOLS, D.D.

The THIRD EDITION, with the Addition of Two
CONFERENCES; the One with a *Machiavelian*, the
Other with an *Atheist*.

All carefully revis'd and prepar'd for the Press by the AUTHOR.

In TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

L O N D O N:

Printed for J. HOLLAND, and J. BOWYER, in St. Paul's
Church-yard; A. BETTESWORTH, and J. BATLEY,
in Pater-noster-row; F. CLAY, without Temple-bar; and
J. WALTHOE, jun^r. over-against the Royal-Exchange.

M. DCC. XXIII.

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THE
PREFACE
TO THE
READER.



AVING oftentimes with Grief
considered the mighty Progress,
which Atheism and Infidelity
have made in this Age ; I
thought it was highly necessary, that those,
who by their Profession had made them-
selves Teachers and Defenders of the Chri-
stian Faith, ought not to spend their whole

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Time in inferring the Morality of its Precepts, and in confuting Innovations made in its Doctrine and Government ; but were obliged sometimes to afford their Aid towards the overthrowing those Principles, which tend to the total Subversion of our common Christianity. Socinians, Papists, and Schismaticks, it is true, are guilty of very grievous and dangerous Errors, but yet the worst of them maintain some Part of the Ground-work of Christianity still ; but Atheists who deny a GOD, and Theists who disown a Revelation, make our whole Religion an Imposture, and all that have to do with it, either Cheats or Fools. So that we, that are the Ministers of the Gospel, are highly concerned to Use the utmost of our Force against these Opinions, which debauch and damn so many Men, whose Souls we have the charge of, which tend to the discredit and total overthrow of our Profession, and expose our Persons to all the foolish Scoffs of idle Men. Nay farther, there is the greatest Danger from these Infidel Doctrines, because they are espoused by Men of all Parties, and by many of those

those, who join themselves with some particular Body of Christians ; for it is easy to observe a great many Men railing bitterly against Papists or Fanaticks, when they believe no more of Jesus Christ, than they do of Transubstantiation ; and have no more liking to the Gospel, than to a long canting Sermon. Now because such Infidels lie herded among diverse Sects of Christians, as they are not so easily discerned, so they are not so vigorously opposed ; and by this means they have of late gained such Strength, that now they begin to look formidable. It is dreadful to think, what Numbers of Men are poisoned by Infidel Principles ; for Atheism and Theism are now got from the Court to the Exchange, they begin to talk them in Shops and Stalls, and the Cavils of Spinoza and Hobbs are grown common, even to the very Rabble. But the greatest Encouragement which Infidelity meets with, is from some Philosophical Gentlemen, who find that the Scripture seems to contradict some Notions in Philosophy, which they have espoused, or some Experiments, which they are persuaded of the

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Truth of ; and therefore for that Reason, they will disbelieve that, and all Revealed Religion. Now some of these Gentlemen, being Men of Parts and Letters, and able to manage an Argument, they generally set upon some unlearned Christian ; they puzzle and confound him with Philosophick Terms and Experiments, and with a Set of Jests and Bantering Expressions against Scripture ; and when thus they have beat the poor Man out of his Road, they think they have for ever triumphed over Christianity.

—Pudet hæc opprobria nobis,
Et dici potuisse, & non potuisse refelli.

These Considerations have put me upon Writing the following Dialogues, and have encouraged me to consider the chief of their Arguments, which they are wont to make use of in their Discourse, or which have been published of late in Atheistical Writings : To the End that well-meaning and religious Men, whose Leisure or Education will not let them search so narrowly into these Disputes, may from this Treatise

Treatise be furnished with sufficient Answers to such Infidel Arguments. Now these Objections are part of them taken from the Discourse of some Deists, whom I have casually conversed with ; but mostly out of a Book published some Years ago, called Oracles of Reason, the first Book I ever saw which did openly avow Infidelity.

As for the Objections I have taken out of that Book, I have not always kept my self strictly to the Words I found there, but chiefly to the Sense ; because otherwise, sometimes the Argument would be too long, and sometimes too obscure : And I have generally dressed up the Arguments with that little varnish, which they usually appear in from the Mouths of Infidels ; because for the most Part their frothy Wit is the principal Part of their Objection ; and therefore I have made Philologus talk all along in their Vein, lest otherways they might pretend the Argument was marred. And this I hope will Excuse me to pious Ears, for those bold and irreligious Expressions, they will meet withal in the Mouth of my Deist ;

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which they must consider are not mine, but theirs ; and when repeated in the Person of an Infidel, I hope will not appear grating or profane.

For after all the Objections which I have heard against such a free Way of urging the Theistical Arguments in Dialogue, I still think it is more like to do good among Infidels, than a methodical Discourse, ranged into Chapter and Section ; for those that are tainted with these Opinions, are generally a sort of fastidious Students, who though they talk much, read but very little, and every Thing which is designed for their Use must be attempered to their Palates, to make it go down with them. Now the dialogical Way of all others is most apt to excite Attention, by constantly springing up new Objections, which set a continual Edge upon the Mind, and make it eager to see them removed ; so that the Author of a Dialogue has this Advantage above others, that he carries the Reader's Thoughts always fresh along with him, which are generally lost, or at least often grow languid in a continued Discourse

course of any considerable Length. I have not indeed brought in such frequent Interlocutions as are requisite for a just Dialogue, like those of Plato and Lucian; for that would have taken up a great deal more Paper to little Purpose, only to please a few curious Critics; and at last the Argument would be but the more obscured by it. And on the other side I have avoided the dry Method of the scholaſtick Objection and Solution; where the Objection is proposed without any Manner of Life, only in order to be refuted; which can never be pleasant to the Reader, who at first Sight sees that the Author sets it up only as a Man of Straw, which when he fights with, he shall be sure to get the better of. I have therefore made use of the middle Way, in clothing the Objections in such a Dress, as two Men that had a Mind to convince one another, can be supposed to use. And this is the Pattern which the best of Writers, Cicero, in his Philosophical Tracts, has set us; whose very Faults I should never be ashamed to imitate.

As

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As to those Tragical Exclamations which some honest People have made, concerning my urging the Infidels Arguments with that little Wit and Briskness, with which they are usually talked in ; and putting some Expressions in my Deist's Mouth, which reflect upon Christianity ; I cannot, upon the most serious Consideration, approve their Zeal : For when I was to write a Dialogue upon this Subject, I must make the Theist say something or other ; and I think I should but little have observed the Rules of Decency, to have made the Infidel talk in the Language of a grave Theologue. For, I am sure, if I had done so, I had made more People laugh at me, than now I have made angry. Besides, I have the whole World before me for Precedents in this Matter. Those Atheistical Prosopopœa's, which are brought in by Solomon in Ecclesiastes, are urged with a peculiar Poignancy of Wit, which the Atheists of all Times have endeavoured to excel in. And Cicero, in his Book de Natura Deorum, frames

the

the Arguments of Valleius the Epicurean, with a great deal more Wit and Smartness, than those of Cotta the Academick, or Balbus the Stoick. And in the same Strain all along in Minutius Fælix, Cecilius exposes the Doctrines of the Christian Religion. And so the Arguments of Trypho the Jew, recorded in Justin Martyr; those of Celsus in Origen, and of Julian in St. Cyril, are more blasphemous Reflexions and Insinuations against Christianity, than any that are found in this Conference. If any shall say, that I help vicious Men to Arguments against Religion: I answer, That these Arguments are common enough to be found elsewhere; and they whose Minds are byassed this Way, know well enough where to look for them in those wicked Books, where they may find all the Poison without the Antidote.

As to my Schemes of the Creation and the Deluge, I propose them only as possible Theories; which I do not lay down, as if they were exactly true, but that they may probably be so; which

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which is all I am concerned to prove against the Infidels, who deny the Possibility of these mighty Revolutions. And those People that pretend to be angry at any Philosophical Explication of the Creation, and the Deluge in this way, may as well be displeased with Buteo and Dr. Wilkins, for proving the Possibility of the Reception of the Animals in Noah's Ark, and with the Generality of the Commentators upon the Bible ; who do upon all Occasions shew the Possibility of those many miraculous Relations which are found there.

There is one Thing indeed, in which I would more particularly desire the Reader's Candour ; and that is my Explication of the Mosaick Creation of the Stars, a little out of the way of other Interpreters ; which, I confess, I do not deliver as my settled Opinion, by any dogmatical Assertion ; but only propound it Problematically, as a possible Way of accounting for the Relation of Moses, which destroys the Infidels charge of Impossibility ; and which

which at last I leave to the Reader's Judgment, either to receive or to reject. And suppose this hypothetical Scheme not to be exactly true, which I am not very eager to contend for ; the cause of Religion will not suffer by it, nor the Infidels reap any Advantage from it. This is only a Point of Philosophy, and not Revelation ; and if there be any Error in it, I am to suffer for it, and not Moses. If this Hypothesis be possible, it proves as much as is aimed at ; for any way of shewing how Moses's Account may be, is a good Proof against those who assert it impossible to be.

When I had finished the four first Parts of this Work, I thought I had done with my Dialogues with the Deist, having gone through every Part of Religion, which is usually attacked by that set of People. But a Book having been not long after published, against the Immortality of the Soul, pretending it to be a mere Heathenish Invention ; and affording some Shew of Philosophical and Scriptural Arguments, such as might shock

shock the Faith of some weak Christians ; and withal having got a sort of Character, among our Natural Religion Men ; as helping them to support their Infidelity with some new Arguments : I thought my self obliged, that my Defence of the Christian Religion might not be wanting in any requisite Point, to answer whatever was therein advanced against the common Faith, which I had omitted in my former Dialogues.

And indeed I had before industriously avoided saying any Thing concerning the Soul's Immortality in those Discourses ; because the Deists do for the generality pretend that That is a Part of their Faith. And in the Summary of the Deist's Religion drawn up by Charles Blount, and published in the Oracles of Reason, pag. 90. The Doctrine of the Soul's Immortality seems to be positively asserted, if one can conclude any Thing to be so, from so loose a Writer. A Man that is endued with the same Vertues we have before-mentioned, need not fear to trust his Soul with God

God after Death. *And then again afterwards; At Death he goes to God, one and the same Being, &c.*

But however, whether the Doctrines contained in that Book, were agreeable to the Principles of Deism or no; they were like to do a great deal of Mischief in the World. And it would besides have been a great Point carried in Favour of the Infidel's Cause, to have any Article of the Catholick Faith weakened. For Religion then stands firm and unshaken in a Man's Breast, when he believes all the Parts of it entire; but when by the Infection of ill Principles he denies one Part, or is doubtful of another; this is like taking a Wheel out of a Watch; it either stops all the rest, or makes the whole Work go Lame and Catching. So that after a while, when such a Man finds that his Religion goes such halting Paces, as it always does when maimed, and mangled according to the Humour of new-fangled Opinions; it appears to him so awkward a Thing, and so uneasy in the Practice, that 'tis a thousand to one he throws it off

off altogether. Now to prevent such a Defection or Apostacy from the Faith upon this Account, I took the Arguments of the foresaid Book under View, and in a fifth Part returned such Answers to them, as will not fail to have their Weight with all considering and impartial Men.

It is my hearty Prayer to God, that these my weak and mean Endeavours may contribute something towards abating the Prevalency of this sort of Infidelity ; or at least may stir up some abler Pen, to vindicate our most Holy Faith, from the Blasphemies and Objections of unreasonable and wicked Men ; which, if they shall do, I shall then reap an ample Recompence of this small Trouble.



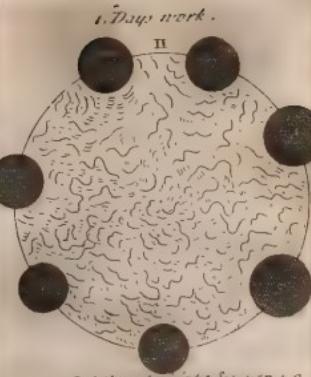
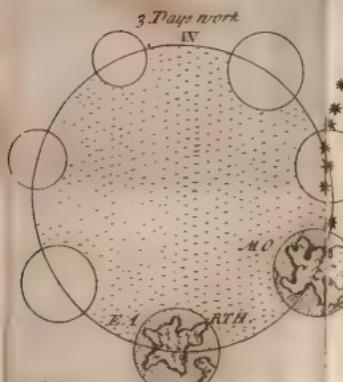
N. B. That the Internal Solid, which is engraved in the Plate, *Fig. I.* and is supposed to move round the Northern Part of the Globe, in a Circum-polar Line, does not belong to the present Hypothesis; but is a Supposition, whereby, in time, may possibly be made out two great Difficulties in Natural Philosophy, viz. The Cause of the Direction and Alteration of the Magnet, and the constant Parallelism of the Earths Axis to the Poles of the World.



Chaos of the Sun.



and seven Planets.



Let there be light, &c. Gen. 1.3.

4 Day work.

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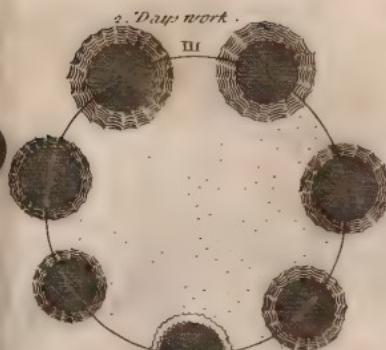
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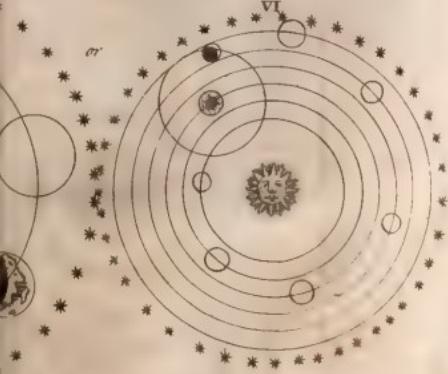
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And God divided the Waters which were under the Firmament, &c. Gen. 1.7.



And god said let there be Light, &c. v. 14.



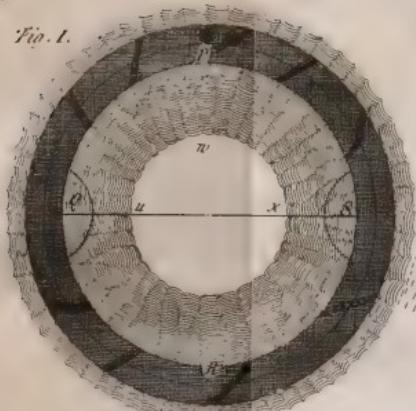


Fig. II.

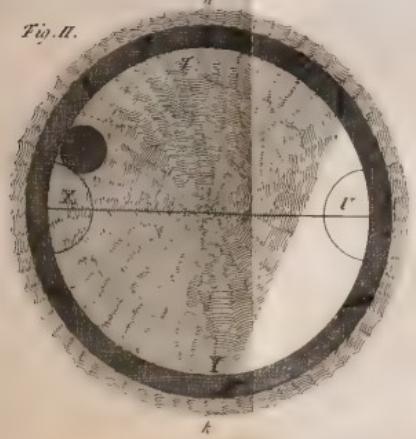
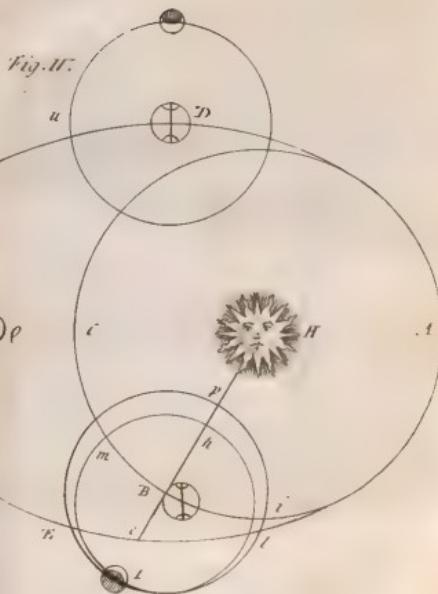


Fig. 1.



Fig. III.





A

CONFERENCE WITH A THEIST.



CREDENTIUS. PHILOLOGUS.



CREDENTIUS was a Gentleman descended from a very ancient and honourable Family, whose Father had left him a very plentiful Estate, and what was yet a greater Token of his Kindness, had given him a virtuous and learned Education; so that by his good Genius and hard Study, he was accomplished beyond the Generality of Persons of his Birth, to defend the Doctrines of his Religion, which he did with so much Sincerity profess. Now this Gentleman for the Privacy of his Studies, and to gratify his Love to Retirement, had withdrawn from the Noise of the Town, which he seldom frequented and never liked; and had for a great while kept close to a Country House of his, not far from the City; which lay at such a convenient

B

Distance

A CONFERENCE

Distance from the Town, whereby he could enjoy the Converse of those few Friends he delighted in, and was freed from the Visits of others, who he thought would be apt to give Interruption to his more desired Studies. Besides this, he had something more particularly observable in his Temper ; that he never endeavoured to establish any strict Friendship with the Gentlemen about him ; but only took Care to maintain such a civil Correspondence with them, as might take off all Imputation of Moroseness and Ill-Neighbourhood. Of these Acquaintance *Philologus* was one, a Gentleman of fine Parts, and very polite Learning ; that hated the Town as much as *Credentius*, and was as great a Lover of Books and Solitude. To this Gentleman *Credentius* had a liking beyond the rest of his Neighbours ; not upon Account of his Principles, but his learned and diverting Conversation ; and with whom he was wont to enjoy a great deal of entertaining Discourse, when the Talk of the other Company was running upon Dogs and Horses. *Philologus* comes one Afternoon to pay a Visit to *Credentius*, whom he finds in his Study among a very large and choice Collection of Books in most Arts and Sciences ; which he had procured for himself with no inconsiderable Charge : For he had taken care to be provided, not only with all History, both ancient and modern, and with a Collection of Clasick and Law-Books ; but was also furnished with all the Fathers and Councils of the best Editions, with a Variety of the Bibles, Criticks and Commentators on the Scripture, and with a considerable Number of the best Critical, Casuistical, and Controversial Divines. By reason of this, he was very serviceable to his neighbouring Clergy, by giving them leave oftentimes to study there ; and by freely lending them such Books, which their Circumstances would not allow them to purchase.

Philologus entring familiarly upon him, as he was wont to do, sees him busy in Writing something out of a Volume of St. Chrysostom's Works, whilst the other Volumes lay by him. Dear, Sir, says he, I am glad to see you.

you. What? You are upon securing your *Credo*? I see you are drawing out from thence some Detachments to make good some weak Place or other in it. *Credentius* was rising up to make his Complement, and to bid him Welcome; but *Philologus* running to him, stops him; saying he should not stir, till he had made an End of his Muster-Roll of Quotations, as he called it; that he did not come to give him Disturbance, but that he would wait his Leisure till he had done, and that in the mean Time he would talk a Word or two likewise with the old *Constantinopolitan* Bishop. *Credentius*, after some pressing, accepts the Offer; who when he had transcribed what he designed, he thus addresses himself to *Philologus*.

Credentius. Well, Sir, I suppose you are weary of this old Father by this Time, for your Palate does not serve you for such grave Writers; come we will go down and take a Glass, which will relish better.

Philologus. In good Truth, Sir, this old Gentleman is very good Company: I did not think these grey Beards had had so much Wit; I protest, here is a Vein of fine Reasoning and neat Language; honest *John* would have made something of it, if he had had the Luck but to have lighted upon a better Subject: Had he but made Speeches at the *Arcopagus*, or the *Forum*, he might have made as good a Figure as *Demosthenes* or *Aeschines*; but as for Faith and Hope they are deadly dull Subjects to play the Orator upon.

Cred. How! Sir. What can be a better Subject, than the great Creator of all Things, his Eternal Son, his Bounty and Mercy, the wonderful Mazes and wise Contrivances of his Providence; the Miracles and Sufferings of our Blessed Saviour, the Peace of a good Conscience, and the Joys of another World? Are not these, think you, as noble Themes, as the little Squabbles of Land-lords and Tenants, and the putting Cases between *Cains* and *Titius*?

Phil. 'Tis true, these are fine golden Tales to those whose Throats are wide enough to swallow them; but they lie cross mine presently: I am sick of a Chapter in

A CONFERENCE

4
Mark before it is half done ; for I must needs tell you, nothing lies so hard upon my Stomach, as a Miracle, or a Revelation. My Nurse was a *Popish Irish Woman*, and she told me such strange Stories of the *Patricks*, the *Bridgets*, and the *Ursula's*, that I took such a Surfeit before I was eight Years old, that I never much cared for that sacred Food since. After I grew up, it is true, I have been more conversant in Bibles than in Legends ; but I find I shall be converted by both alike ; for I have a Budget full of Exceptions against the whole Story, there seems to be so much of the *Sir Bevis* in all the Relations ; for in almost every Page I meet with somewhat which turns my Stomach, from *Genesis* to the *Revelations*. What a Work do we make with *Moses* and the Prophets, with Christ and the Apostles-----

Rudeness
and Danger
of Atheisti-
cal Dis-
course.

Cred. For God's sake, Sir, hold. If Religion has no Tie upon you, let Civility restrain you from this Talk ; although you should not, it may be, be Christian enough, yet you are too much a Gentleman to abuse my Friend before me ; and I think I may bespeak of you as much Civility to my Saviour, which I am sure I have more Reason for. Such Discourse as this may be very edifying in a Club of you Wits ; but as much as you laugh at my *Credo's*, I want Faith to think my self secure amongst those that talk after this rate. You Gentlemen ought to be very secure of your Hand, and your House too, let me tell you, before you venture to talk thus : I think my House is none of the slenderest built, and I take my Walls to be proof against any Thing but Blasphemy ; but when Men make sport with God and Religion, I am afraid of the Rafters cracking, and the Bricks tumbling about my Ears. Therefore, pray, Sir, let us go down and talk of something else.

Phil. Well, Sir, I see you want not Zeal, and I am sorry I should want good Manners. I beg your Pardon heartily, since I have offended you ; but for the future you shall see I will be as respectful to you upon this Account as you can desire. I can bow if you please at the

the Name of *Jesus*, as reverently as a Bishop. I find I can learn a Court Fashion as well as *Naaman* himself ; nay, if I should happen to go with them into the House of *Rimmon*, my Conscience would ne'er read me a Lecture of Idolatry, for I could ev'n scrape a Leg as well as the best of them, and go in Peace. But when you tie up our Tongues from speaking upon this Subject, you will hinder us from a just Information, so that we poor Infidels shall never be able to look *Sion*-wards. For my Part I should be very glad to take a View of the new *Jerusalem*, if I could but once see it ; nay, I would make the best Use of mine Eyes, and take the Help of a little Opticks to discover it ; but there seem to me to be so many Difficulties in the Belief of Revealed Religion, that I cannot fancy any Man of Sense does really believe it. I know you have too much Reason to be imposed upon by such gross Fallacies ; and if we were to measure, I imagine your Creed and mine are much of the same Length : You only are the silent, and I the talking Unbeliever. I have a little more Impudence to keep me from blushing when I appear singular, and I have a Back broad enough to bear the ill Names the Parsons give me ; but you lie snug and keep your own Counsel, you set in with the Mob, and do as they do, only for fear of being hooted at. So that when all is done, I fancy, *Credentius* and *Philologus* are Believers both alike.

Cred. I am sorry you should conceive so ill an Opinion of me, seeing I am not conscious I have given you any just Occasion for it. For I will assure you, as I have not taken up my Religion upon Trust, so I do not profess the least Article of it upon account of Popularity. I am so fully persuaded of all the Parts of the Truth of the Christian Religion, I think it so admirable a System of Morality ; so excellently contrived for the good of Mankind ; the Rewards it promises, and the Punishments it threatens, are founded upon such firm and unshaken Grounds ; that I would venture to maintain it against the Contradictions of all Mankind ; and Singularity should be so far from discouraging me, that I

A CONFERENCE

would profess the Doctrine of the Cross by my self alone against the whole Infidel World. As for your Discoursing upon this Subject, it is so far from being ungrateful to me, that I think it the greatest Comfort and Happiness I can enjoy ; to run over those blessed Truths, which are the Comfort of my Life, and the Hopes of my Salvation ; nay, I can easily hear what Objections you have to raise against them, if so be you will be pleased to urge them with Modesty, or with a Design to receive Satisfaction ; but I have no Patience to hear you only expose and ridicule those Doctrines, whilst you are resolved never to be convinced of their Truth.

Phil. I might very well deserve this Reprimand of yours, if I should pretend to laugh at that Religion I did believe ; but I must needs tell you, as far as my Creed goes, I am a very strong and orthodox Believer, and a very strict Observer of it. I only laugh at some other silly Opinions, which I fancy the rest of the World are gull'd with ; and why should not I laugh at them, as well as they laugh at me ? They call me Atheist, and make me their Fool, and I call them Bigots and give them the same Livery. I have as much Respect, Sir, for Natural Religion, as you can have for the Christian, and I hope if I live up to that, to be as happy hereafter ; therefore I presume I may make bold to be merry a little with your Religion, as your Gentlemen are with mine. I am sure mine is of the ancienter House ; and *Natural Religion* is God's Law most certainly, whether your *Revealed* one, as you call it, be so or no. So that if I do not believe your Tenets, why should not I make as much Sport with you, as you do with the Moon in *Mahomet's Sleeve* ?

Religion,
the erroneous, not
to be scoffed at.

Cred. I confess I never liked making Sport with any Man's Religion, for it is not only a piece of Rudeness, but a very inhuman Cruelty ; for it sets a Man's Soul upon the Rack, to see that ridiculed, which he accounts most sacred. And perhaps that Precept in the Mosaick Law, *Thou shalt not speak evil of the Gods of*

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the People, is to be understood in this Sense. For when the Jews were going into a strange Country, it was the most probable Way to gain Proselytes to their Law, rather to demonstrate the Truth of their own, than to rail at the Heathens Religion. Suppose that I was about to convert a Turk at *Constantinople*, can you think it was the most prudent Way to railly upon *Mahomet's* Pease and his Pidgeon, and his falling Sickness? I'll warrant you, I should catch a Tartar instead of converting a Turk: 'Tis ten to one, but the outrageous Infidel revenged his Prophet's Quarrel with his Scimetar; so that I should make my self a Martyr, instead of making him a Convert.

Phil. I beg your Pardon heartily, if I have spoken my Thoughts a little too freely upon this Subject, for I will assure you I did not in the least design to offend you; my only Aim was to persue the Truth, and to hear what you can say upon this Subject, wherein I promise my self a great deal of Satisfaction; for then I am sure I shall hear no common-place Talk, but something new and solid of your own Stock. If you are convinced of the Truth of the Christian Religion, I am certain it is upon strong Arguments and weighty Grounds; for as you are too wise to be imposed upon by Fallacy, so you are too honest to be byassed by Interest; therefore I may expect to hear something more considerable from you, than from the Parsons, who are too well paid for making Speeches upon this Subject, to be impartial in it. But I protest, Sir, I am no hardy resolved Infidel, nor such an one that has nothing to say against Christianity, but only to call it Names; for I have so many considerable Objections to urge against it, that I must needs suspend my Faith 'till I can see them answered. Nor are these my Objections only levelled against a word or two in the Bible, or some few seeming Contradictions, which may perhaps be accounted for by different Acceptations, and Variety of Transcribers; but against the whole Compas and Tenor of Christianity, which all seems to be contradictory and contrary to Reason. For as far as ever I could perceive, Christiani-

A CONFERENCE

The Particulars of
the Conference.

ty seem'd to consist, or at least was bottomed upon the Truth of these Particulars. 1. *The Account of the Creation which Moses gives us.* 2. *The Fall of Man presently after that Creation.* 3. *His Redemption from the Calamities of that Fall, by Jesus Christ.* And Lastly, *The Truth of the Scripture upon whose Authority all this rests.* But if I have good reason to believe, that the World was long before this pretended Creation, that there are a great many Contradictions and Improbabilities in *Moses's Relation* of it that there is no Likelihood of such a Lapse of Mankind, nor is there Need of any such Redemption, nor that the Books which are brought to prove all this, are of that Divine Authority they pretend to; you may then very well conclude, that I have something more to say against your Religion, than some few Flourishes of Wit and gay Periods, which your Clergy would make you believe, is all that Men of my Persuasion have to encounter it. Nay, I will add farther, if you can satisfy me in these Particulars, and clear up these Difficulties, I will profess Christianity to Morrow; for it is not my Vices, but my Objections, as I told you, which hinder me from joining Communion with you; and I do not know but that I may live as virtuously and honestly as those who go so gravely to Church, with black Caps and broad Bibles. And therefore if you please, *Credentius*, we will take a Walk in your Garden, and talk over a Point or two of this Subject; for the Weather is too hot, either to drink, or to stay within.

Cred. I did not think, *Philologus*, to entertain you after this philosophical Manner. But pray, Sir, how long have you been in Love with the *Peripatitum*? I thought you were too much of *Epicurus* his Party, to take Example after *Aristotle's Sect.* I should think some other jolly Philosopher were a more agreeable Pattern for you to take, than those stingy Speculatists, who give their Friends a Walk to save their Wine. But if it is resolv'd that you and I must enter the Lists of a Disputation this Evening, I think it will not be inconvenient to walk abroad; for if we shall grow too warm there, we shall

have

have Air to cool us. And so, Sir, at your Pleasure, I follow.

Phil. This delicate Walk of Orange Trees, *Credentius*, puts me in Mind of your Paradise, and consequently of the *Mosaick* Creation; which is the first Point which you and I must clear up. But I would not have you think that I find fault with this Account, because I am persuaded with *Epicurus*, that the World was not made by God. For *Epicurus* was a Blockhead to entertain such a silly Thought as this; and no Man of common Sense, that ever thought, could be of his Opinion. I am as impatient as you can be, at the Ridiculousness of his Philosophy; for his Doctrine of the Eternity, the Weight and falling of Atoms, is but a System of Non-sense. For those weighty Atoms of his would be always falling and falling through the infinite Space, and would never be able to meet together to frame a World; and one Atom could be no more able to join with another, than the Hind-wheel can overtake the foremost. And as for that *παρένθετος*, or Side-Motion, which was afterwards added, I look upon it to be but a pitiful Botch, to patch up this foolish Hypothesis. I am fully satisfied that the World had its Origin from a wise or powerful Being, the first Cause of all things, from whose *eternal* Womb all things have sprung up, and whose Power and Goodness still preserves the World in the same State in which it always was. So that I espy two principal Faults in the Account of the *Mosaick* Creation. The first is, Because he gives the World too late a Being, it having a Sub-
The Ground sistence infinite Ages before he says it had; the second is, of Theism. That supposing the World was created in Time, and at the Time he supposes, his Account is so extravagant, that it cannot satisfy any reasonable Man. And these two Points in the first Place, I think I shall be able to make out.

Cred. Well! Sir, I see you have ranged your Exceptions very methodically: You are resolved to find me Work enough before you have done; for these Heads, I presume, are teeming with an Abundance of Objections, so that you will make me run through a Body of Divinity before

before I have answered them all. For my Part I must maintain the Grounds of Christianity as well as I can, and I am sorry it is like to suffer so much by so ill a Defender. But God be thanked I have a good Cause to set against your Wit and Parts; for I take every Thing which can be said against our Religion, to be so inconsiderable, that very weak Parts, and a slender Stock of Learning, will be able to encounter the most doughty Arguments which can be urged against it. And therefore will you be pleased to proceed upon your first Head.

Of the Eternity of the World.

Phil. Why, Sir, the first Thing I have to say against the History of the Creation, as it is related by *Moses*, is, that he makes the World to begin but between five and six Thousand years ago, when it is demonstrable it has continued from all Eternity. And this has been the Doctrine of the wisest Philosophers heretofore. For to omit *Aristotle* and others of later Date, I find *Ocellus Lucanus* *, who was almost co-temporary with *Moses*, if not before him, to have been of this Opinion; and he is so admirable a Philosopher, that in a Question of this Nature, I would take his Word before that of the Jewish Law-giver. But his Book of the *Nature of the Universe*, which is still extant, gives us so many demonstrative Arguments of the Truth of this Opinion, that we need go no farther than that excellent Treatise to confute the History of the Creation.

Cred. But before you proceed, give me Leave to remind you of a very great Errour, in asserting, that *Ocellus*, the Author of that Treatise, was precedent, or any thing nigh Co-temporary with *Moses*. But supposing that Treatise to be wrote by *Ocellus Lucanus*, that ancient Pythagorean, there was no less than eleven hundred Years Distance between his Writing and *Moses*'s. For say that *Moses* wrote ten Years after the *Israelites* coming out of *Egypt*, which was *An. Mundi*, 2470. the Book of the

* Oracles of Reason, p. 216.

Creation will then be wrote *An. Mundi*, 2480; but I will make it appear that *Ocellus Lucanus*, wrote but much about the Year of the World 3580. which is eleven hundred Years later. Now *Ocellus Lucanus* lived much about the Time when *Plato* wrote, or perhaps a little before, being both Co-temporaries, but *Ocellus* the elder Man. For *Plato's* School was in its most flourishing Condition in the 102 Olympiad, when he was about fifty Years old, but he was born (as * *Laertius* informs us from *Apollodorus's Chronicks*) in the 88th Olympiad (i. e.) about *An. Mundi*, 3525; and it is as plain that *Ocellus* lived much about the same Time. For *Laertius* in the Life of *Archytas* gives us two Letters between *Archytas* and *Plato*, about *Ocellus*, who was lately dead: "Wherein *Archytas* tells *Plato*, that he had undertook the Business of Publishing some posthumous Pieces of *Ocellus*, and upon that Account had been with the Family of the *Lucani*, and particularly with *Ocellus's* Grand-children, and had obtained the Papers of them, viz. his Book of Laws, of Monarchy, of Sanctity, of the Generation of the Universe; and adds, that he will send the other Pieces to him as soon as they should be found." To which *Plato* answers, That this was a very acceptable Present, that he very much admired the Writer, and that he was worthy of that most ancient Descent from the *Trojans*. Now if *Ocellus* were so ancient a Writer as *Moses*, how should *Plato* never have seen his Books before? How should it come into his Head to put *Archytas* upon Search after Books, which were wrote eleven hundred Years before? Or how could they be supposed to have lain dormant in the Family for so many Ages? If he had been as old as *Moses*, *Plato* would never have mentioned his most ancient Descent from the *Trojans*; for *Moses* lived long before those *Trojan* Ancestors were born. But the Letter is express that *Archytas* had this Book from his Grand-children, which were probably his Heirs, and who had the Right of disposing of his Papers when he was Dead. So that it ap-

* *Diog. Laert. Vit. Plat.*

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pears that this *Ocellus* was so far from being a Writer, as old as *Moses*, that he was but a late *Grecian* Writer. For not to mention *Orpheus*, *Homer*, and *Hesiod*, who lived six or seven Centuries before ; most of the Greek Books which are most commonly read, were much ancienter than this Author. All the celebrated Dramatical Poets, *Aristophanes*, *Æschylus*, *Euripides*, *Sophocles* ; all the Lyrick ones, *Stesichorus*, *Alcaeus*, *Pindar*, *Sappho*, *Simonides*, *Anacreon* ; and other moral Poets ancienter than these, *Tyrtæus*, *Theognis*, *Phocylides* ; besides the famous Historians *Herodotus* and *Thucydides*. But in Respect of the Jewish Books he was but a Writer of Yesterday ; for he was so far from being able to vie with *Moses* for Antiquity, that the very last Writer of the Old Testament wrote before him : for the Canon was completed, and the Prophecies sealed up in *Malachi*, who wrote almost forty Years before this Writer. For *Malachi* flourished in the first Year of *Artaxerxes Mnemon*, and *Ocellus* not till about the 35th. So that we have proved not only *Moses*, but the whole Bible, to be ancienter than this old Writer.

But after all, I believe I can make it appear, that this Book, which you mention, is not so ancient as the Author it lays claim to ; but was composed by some Modern in Imitation of that ancient Piece of *Ocellus's* which *Archytas* in his Letter mentions. For there are some manifest Marks which make it appear, that it is a Piece of much later Date than *Ocellus Lucanus*: 1. For it is known to all that the ancient *Pythagoreans* wrote always in the *Dorick Dialect*, as appears by the Works or Fragments yet extant of *Timaeus*, *Locrus*, &c. But this Treatise is wrote in common Greek ; nay it is evident, that * *Ocellus* himself wrote in *Dorick*, as does appear from what is quoted from him by *Stobæus* in his Eclogues ; viz. a Fragment out of his Book of Laws, which *Archytas* says he wrote. In which Fragment, Λυχα, οικεος, Οντα, ταν αυτα, &c. shews plainly the Dialect in which this Author wrote. 2dly, We may observe that the Author of this Piece was

* Stob, Ecl. Phys. Lib. 1, Cap. 16.

an Aristotelian Philosopher, who goes all along upon Aristotle's Principles, viz. The four Elements : talks much of the τὸ ζεῖν, γένεσις, and the other Elementary Qualities, of the Transmutation of the Elements, of Antiperistasis, &c. almost in the very Words of Aristotle in his Books of Natural Auscultation. So that instead of being as old as Moses, 'tis probable he may not be much older than Simplicius or Philoponus.

Phil. Let this be as it will, the Weight of the Arguments, he produces, does not depend upon the Antiquity of the * Author ; and those I am sure are too strong to be baffled by a little Criticism and Chronology. The Sum of the first Argument is this. If the World or Universe be generated or had a beginning, 'tis generated out of Nothing or Something. But all Men agree that Nothing can be produced from Nothing. To say it was produced out of Something is as unreasonable ; for that Something must be a Part of the Universe, or the whole Universe (because there is nothing besides the Universe) and that would be to make a Thing produced out of it self, which is of all the most palpable Contradiction.

Cred. I know this Doctrine of the World's being formed out of Nothing, sat so cross in Epicurus his Brains, that it set him upon the Scent of his Atheistical Opinions, to get rid of it. For as the Story tells us, when he heard a Grammarian whom he was a Scholar to, explaining those famous Verses of Hesiod in his *Theogonia*,

† "Ἡνὶ μὲν ἀγάτικα Χαῦ γίνεται, αὐτὰς ἔπειτα
Γᾶν ἐγεύσεψθε, πάντας ἐδόθη — — —

*Chaos was first form'd by th' Eternal Mind,
Next the wide Earth, the Seat of every Kind.*

He very pertly asked, if the Earth was made out of the Chaos, what the Chaos was made out of ? At which

* Ocell. §. 2. Or. Reas. p. 219. + Sext. Empir. cont. Math. Lib. 9. Diog. Laert. vit. Epic.

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Question the Grammariān being confounded, made answēr that it was not his Province to teach such Things, but that of the Philosophers. With this Answer *Epicurus* being unsatisfied, he left the Grammariān, and be-took himself to the Study of Philosophy. But notwithstanding this, I cannot see any Thing in this philosophicall Axiom, *Ex nihilo nil fit*, that should any ways make against God's Creation of the World out of nothing. Indeed this has been an Axiom in the Mouths of Philosophers of all sorts, the *Aristotelian* and *Pythagorean*, *Platonist*, and *Stoick*; but then a great many of them meant no more by it, than that it has no Place in natural Productions; but that it ought not to be extended to the primary Production of Things. For *Empedocles*'s Verses quoted by *Plutarch* and *Aristotle*, are the most ancient Piece in the *Gracian* Philosophy, where this Axiom is urged: And he only makes use of it to prove, that Matter is not produced in the Generation of Things, nor destroyed in their Corruption.

Nūmōs, &c.

*Children in Knowledge! vainly to suppose
That all that's born from Nothing has arose:
Or when in Death the scatter'd Parts do fly,
To think that Ought does into Nothing die.*

And we find that the *Corpuscularian* Philosophers, who made Atomes the first Principles of Things, were those that did chiefly make use of this Axiom; to confute the Doctrines of Forms and substantial Essences, which *Aristotle* and some others before him did explain the *Phænomena* of Nature by. And indeed this Axiom was very conclusive against that Opinion; for when by that Philosophy it should be asserted, that a Room was enlightened by the Generation of the Form of Light, or that Fire was extinguished by the Corruption of the Form of Fire; it was very seasonably replied in the Words of this Maxim, *Ex nihilo nil fit*, nothing is produced ~~εξ αντον~~, but from something which was before; a Thing

is not produced by Annihilation of the old Form, and the Production of a new Substance, which was not before, out of nothing ; for the course of Nature allows of no such supernatural Productions ; all these *Phænomena* are to be accounted for by the Alteration of the Figure and Motion of the Parts, and the different Appearances they produce in the Mind of Man. And this Dr. Cudworth * in his Intellectual System has proved at large, to be the meaning of this Assertion of the ancient *Atomick* Philosophers. But then, Sir, be pleased to consider, what this Axiom has to do to confront the Omnipotent Power of God, in the first Creation ; unless it can be proved that it implies an absolute Impossibility, for God to create any thing out of nothing ; which no one can reasonably assert. Now no one can say it implies an absolute Impossibility ; for then such Impossibility must arise either from Want of Power in God to do it, or from some natural Repugnancy in the Thing it self. It cannot proceed from Want of Power in God ; for he is the Origin of all Power, and every Thing that is possible to be done can be done by him. To say the Impossibility arises from the Part of the *Subject* is as incongruous. For such Impossibility must be caused from a *Power of resisting* in that Thing, or from a *Contradiction*, which the doing thereof would imply. But there can be no *Power of resisting* in any Thing which is able to resist the Divine Activity ; because that and all other Power came from Him, which argues in Him a greater Power. But as for the *Subject* of Creation, that is *Nothing*, and therefore, that to be sure cannot give any Resistance. There remains only to prove, that it implies no *Contradiction* to produce Something out of Nothing. Indeed *to be* and *not to be* at the *same Time* implies a Contradiction, but *to be* and *not to be* at *diverse Times* does not ; and the Reason is obvious. Because the Existence of a Thing in any one Instant does perfectly exclude all Possibility of Non-existence for that Instant ; but the not being of a Thing

* Intel. Syst. Cap. 1. p. 30, &c.

in any Instant does not exclude any Possibility of its being afterward, when God Almighty pleases. Now it is so far from being a Contradiction for a Thing to be produced out of nothing by God Almighty, that we find it (according to the Philosophy of some) in some Measure done even by finite Beings. For they account *Accidents* a sort of Beings, which are produced by Creatures themselves, out of nothing, by a Kind of subordinate and delegated Creation, which God has given them the Power of, by Virtue of their Beings. Thus the Mind produces Thought, the Fire produces Heat, the Sun produces Light, which are all distinct from the Substances which produce them, and yet are generated out of *nothing*. But however both *Thought* and *Light* and *Heat*, are real Beings, and do properly exist, and are composed out of no Pre-existent Matter, and therefore must be produced out of Nothing; either by the immediate Power of God continually acting, which is most reasonable; or by a subordinate Power communicated to the Creature with its Being. Now, why is it not as easy for the Deity to produce Substance out of nothing by his Almighty Power, as it is for a Creature to produce Accidents by his finite and limited One? Or why could not God-Almighty produce all Things out of nothing at first, as well as produce these Accidents, Modes, or Appearances every Moment? All the Difficulty which makes some Men unwilling to allow this Power to God is, because we do not see any Instance of this before our Eyes, being used only to natural and artificial Productions. We see Blood produced out of Food, and Flesh out of Blood; we see the Juices of the Earth turned into Wood, the Wood into Smoak and Flame, whilst the Matter remains the same after those so many Alterations; and therefore we conclude that no Production or Corruption can be made any other Way than this. We experience that a Carpenter cannot build a Ship or a House without pre-existing Materials, and therefore we are apt sillily to conclude that God himself can do no more; because we cannot conceive how he should do it, or because he must do it by other

other Methods, than those which we are used to. But I pray, is not this as unreasonable, as for a blind Man to deny, that any one can perceive Colours, because he cannot possibly conceive, how they should be distinguish'd? And if there be other good Arguments to prove, that God has created the World out of nothing, it is in vain to deny it; because it is inconceivable by us, or contrary to the Course of Nature, since the Creation.

Phil. Well! but what say you to *Ocellus's* * second Argument? If the World be made or produced, it must follow the Laws of other Productions; it must grow from worse to better, from its infirm Estate to its *ἀρμόνιον* or Vigour, and so decline to its old Age and Dissolution. But we find that the World always was as it is now; there has never been the least Decay in it, no: the least Improvement of its Perfection; it always stands at the same Stay; and so always must continue.

Cred. To this Argument, Sir, be pleased to take this Ans^t. to Answer. *1st*, That it is a Thing somewhat uncertain, Arg. II. whether or no the World continues in the same State it was in at the beginning; most learned Men for many Ages have been of the contrary Opinion, that it grows Old, and doth every Day verge towards its final Destruction; and Dr. *Hackwell*, who wrote his Book of Providence about Threescore Years ago, was the first Man that had the Boldnes to encounter with the received Opinion, and he raised himself not a small Number of Adversaries upon it. But truly I am so far of that learned Man's Opinion, as not to think any very remarkable Decay is to be found in the World; for the heavenly Bodies do observe the same Motions, and when espie any Difference between the ancient and modern Accounts, it ought to be attributed to Want of Exactness in the old Calculations; the Bodies of Men are of the same Magnitude, as is manifest by the ancient Measures of Digits, Feet, &c. and their natural Parts or In-

* *Ocellus Luc. Tex. 3. Orat. Reaf. p. 211.*

geny seem not at all to be impaired, as appears from the modern Writings and Inventions. But if we consider the primitive Fecundity of the Earth, and its Barrenness now adays ; of which I will discourse more by and by ; which natural Fruitfulness is so celebrated in ancient Writers under the Name of the Golden Age ; and if we farther add the Longævity of our antediluvian Progenitors, and others for a considerable Time after the Flood ; one would be inclined to think, that Nature has lost much of its primitive Strength it enjoy'd, when the Earth was impregnated with its juvenile Vigour.

Creation of the World not like ordinary Productions. 2dly, There is no Necessity, because the World is produced in Time, that this primary Production should in all Respects answer to our natural and common Productions. I confess, I have always took it to be not only an immodest but an ignorant Way of arguing, to say God must act such a Way, because Nature so requires it, that otherways it would not be a natural Way of acting, and the like ; as if God was not the God of Nature, as well as of every Thing else ; or that the Power of God must be bounded by that of Nature. So in the present Case, because Men see that we are first Infants, then Children, afterwards Men, and lastly old Men, which is the Series from our Production to our Dissolution ; therefore some conclude, that the like must follow from the Production of the World. I remember there is a notable Dispute in *Macrobius*, which was oldest, a Hen, or an Egg. And I think that Question might be easily solved, by saying, that naturally the Egg is before the Hen, because she is generated out of it ; but in the first Creation the first Hen was produced supernaturally, otherways than from an Egg, because there was no preceding Hen to lay it. And the Answer is the same to the Matter in hand. All natural Productions do proceed in the aforesaid Method *from worse to better*, &c. but the Creation of the World is a supernatural Production, precedent to all the Laws of Nature, which were to be observed after the first Production, but were impossible to be observed before.

3dly, But

3dly; But though there be no visible Decay in the *World*, it is no sufficient Argument to evince the Eternity of it; especially to those who have Revelation against it; for nothing, but a downright Contradiction, can make them believe the contrary. But did never any Thing come to an End, but what had some visible Decay before it? Was never any Man kill'd or did die, but only by a lingring Sicknes? Is not an House as liable to be destroyed by Fire or Earthquake, as by Delapidations? For we do not expect that the World should be destroyed, from the Defect of some internal Principle thereof; but by the Will of God, and by the withdrawing his preserving Power, which keeps it in its Frame and Order. We do not think, that the World shall decay like an old House, piece by piece; but just like the stopping of a Clock all of a sudden, when the Weights are down: For when it shall please God to withdraw that divine Energy, which informs this great Machine, and sets it a moving; all the Wheels of Nature will be checked in an Instant, and move no more for ever; and if he does likewise deny his preserving Power, which keeps the Parts in their being, even the very Matter of them must crumble and sink into nothing.

Phil. Well, Sir, let this be as it will, I have another knotty Piece of Work for you, and that is another Argument of *Ocellus's*; which is this. If the World be created, then is the Universe created; for I call the World by the Name of the Universe, being a perfect Collection of all Natures; for besides the Universe there is nothing, and if there be any Thing it is contained in the Universe, either as a Part or an Excrecence thereof; now to make the Universe, or every Thing to be created, implies a Contradiction; for if every Thing be created, there will be nothing left to create; so that it must upon this Score be asserted, that something must create it self, which of all Contradictions is the most absurd. Does not this Objection pinch a little?

Cred. And a very little too; for indeed it is nothing else but a childish Fallacy, grounded upon the doubtful Arg. III.

Signification of the word *Univerſe*; which sometimes may be used to signify the whole Series of Beings, whether create or uncreate, so as to take in God himself; or else to ſignify the whole *Compagies* of natural Bodies conſisting of Earth, Sea, Heaven, Stars, or ſometimes together with these, Spirits, Angels, and the whole intellectual World, and in ſhort every Thing beſides God. Now when we ſay that the Universe or every Thing was created, we take the Universe in its latter Signification exclusively of God, who being an eternal Mind was self-subſiſtent and uncreate, but of his infinite Bound-ty did communicate a Being to all those other Things which before had none of their own; which Commu-nication we call Creation.

Phil. Again proceeds that excellent Philosopher *. The World is the Cause of all Perfection to other Things, but is of it ſelf perfect; and that which is the Cause of Safety to others, muſt of its ſelf be ſafe and permanent; alſo that which is the Cause of Compactedneſs to others, muſt of it ſelf be compacted: But the World is to all other Things the Cause of Being, Safety, and Perfeſti-on †; wherefore of its ſelf it muſt needs be eternal, per-fect, and permanent for ever.

Anſ. to Arg. IV. *Cred.* I grant this Argument would be conclusive, if the World was the Cause of all Perfection; because no Perfection can produce it ſelf, and therefore muſt have an eternal Caufe: Which Ways of Proof we make uſe of, in demonstrating the Necessity of a Deity. But here we deny the World to be the Cause of all Perfection; and ſay whatever Perfections it enjoys, it received them from ſome ſuperiour Caufe, namely, God.

Phil. But pray why may not the World it ſelf be God? And then it will be all one to ſay that the World is the Cause of all Perfection, or that God is the Cause of it. And this Notion does not ſeem at all to entrench

* *Ocellus Oracles of Reason*, p. 213. † *Cum Microcosmus à min-do trahit, vivit Microcoſmus: cum Mundus à Microcoſmo trahit, deficit Microcoſmus.* H. Blount de Anima Mund.

upon the Majesty of the Deity ; for we shall secure all his Attributes this Way, as well as you can yours : For I look upon the World both to be Eternal and Infinite, which are the two great Foundations of the Notion of a Deity : For there never was a Time in which there was not this vast Extension of Matter regularly ordered as it is now, and there is no part of Space but what is possessed by some beautiful Machine or other, which its Inhabitants esteem a World : Now the Collection of these wonderful Beings, the All, or the Universe, is what I call God. 'Tis he in whom we live, move, and have our Being, and the Writer of your *Pentateuch* calls him very well the *I AM*, or the *Being*, because nothing else besides him *is* ; we are nothing but some little *pulvisculi* of his immense Nature, which appear in this or that Figure according to his Pleasure ; who himself is one eternal *Proteus* exhibiting himself sometimes in this Form, and sometimes in that. Now you may call this great infinite Being either *Matter*, or the *Universe*, or *God*, or what you please, it is much the same ; and it is all one whether you say *God* is *Eternal*, or the *World*, or *Universe* is so.

Cred. I find this is an Argument, which takes mightily with some *Atheistical* Men of late, who rather than own such a God as all pious and wise Men in all Ages have worshiped, will make a God of Stocks and Stones, and of all the vilest Things in Nature. But we will prove that this *All* or the *Universe* cannot be God, from those Affections or Properties, which we generally call Attributes, which all Men that have believed the Deity have acknowledged to be in him. I shall argue first from his *Immutability*, which all Philosophers and wise Men have attributed to him ; because a whimsical changeable God, are Terms incompatible, the Idea of one of which does perfectly destroy the other. Now if we make the World to be God, we must make him to vary and change every Moment ; to be turned into this Thing and that Thing, to have this and that Quality, to be hot and cold, and moist and dry, to be

high and low, and little and great ; to be a Man and a Horse, to be a Tree and a Fish ; this would be to render God the Sport of every wise Man, who must needs laugh at the Shiftings of such an odd capricious Deity. For if all Things be God, what need of this spectrous fantastick Exhibition of himself ; he can make himself known to no Body but himself ; and therefore he had as good keep himself to his own original Nature.

Phil. But pray, Sir, why should it argue more Imperfection and Inconstancy, for God thus to change the Representation of his Nature, and to exhibit himself in a new Manner, than for him to create Things anew, or to produce them ? The one is a Change made by God as well as the other ; and then the Whimsy and Caprice will lie hard upon you too.

Cred. The Difference is very wide, Sir, in these two Cases ; in the one God changes, in the other he is changed. It implies no Imperfection in the Deity, to make a Change in his Creatures ; because there is no real Alteration made in him, but only a new Exercise of his Power, which is Perfection, and not Imperfection. But for God himself to be changed, implies Weakness ; for all Change is either for better or for worse ; to change for the better argues the Deity imperfect before, and to change for the worse implies both a Weakness in his former Knowledge, and a Diminution in his subsequent Power. But it is not so when a Change is made by the divine Nature in its Creatures ; for that is but agreeable to the Excellence of that admirable Being, whose Goodness and Bounty seem necessarily to require it. For if there were no Change to be made in the Creatures, it would hinder that large Communication of the Divine Goodness to his Creatures, and would hedge in God's Bounty within narrow Bounds. For if there never was to be but one Set of Individuums in the World, and they only were to live all along to Eternity ; not the thousandth Part of Beings would enjoy that Communication of Happiness, which now they do. So that I conclude,

a Change

*God does
not change
himself by
new Exhibi-
tions, but
his Crea-
tures by
new Pro-
ductions.*

a Change in the Creature is consonant to the Wisdom and Goodness of God ; but a Change in God himself would be Weakness and Folly.

But I will charge this yet horner upon you. For when such you say that God is changed into this Variety of Figures we behold in the World, you must either assert, that this Mutation is caused by the *Will* of God, or by Necessity, both which Assertions are equally absurd. For to make the World God, and to say these Alterations are caused voluntarily by him, is to make the Nature of God to depend upon his *Will*; which all Men, who understand what they say, must make necessary. For who ever said, that God *was* because he *would be*? They rather say, God *is*, because he *must be*. There is a Necessity, that there should be some primary Cause of Things, which was necessarily of himself, and *could not but be*; but all other Things depend upon his *Will*, and are because *he would have them be*. And so it is in all the Attributes of the Divine Nature. God Almighty is necessarily *Omnipotent*, not because he has a Mind to be so. He is *Pure*, and *Just*, and *Merciful*, because he cannot be otherways. But to make the Nature of God consist in this Series of *voluntary Mutations*, is to be guilty of the most absurd and manifest Contradiction, because it is to assert an Effect prior to its Cause. For to say the Nature of God is so, because he will have it so, is to make an *Act of Volition*, which is the Effect of the Divine Nature or Understanding, to be the Cause of it : The act of *Willing* supposes an understanding Nature before, and the Nature *Willed* supposes it yet not to be.

Neither can these Changes of the Deity, or this successive Nature of God (which is here asserted) be necessary neither. There is but one Thing in the World of *it self* necessary, and that is God; and all other Things which are necessary, are so, because his Will has determined them. God necessarily is, because he can have no Cause ; but we cannot say so of any Thing else. We cannot say, that such particular Men, or Horses, or Trees, are necessarily ; because we can assign a Cause of their Production,

duction, namely God, who might (if he pleased) not have produced them. Nay, though 'twas only probable that God produced them, or if 'twere only possible they might not have been produced by him, it were Argument enough against the Necessity of their Being. But farther, to make all these Beings to be only the necessary Emanations of the Deity, is not only to destroy all Religion, but even Free-will and common Sense. For why should I praise God and honour him for this noble Being I enjoy, and for the Comforts of this Life, which (according to this Opinion) he could not but afford me; any more than I should thank the Clouds, for letting down those Rains, which they could not keep up? I am as sure, that I have a Free-will, as I am sure of any Conclusion in the World; and therefore I am sure that any Argument, which shall go about to prove a necessary Fatality is false. I am sure I have a Liberty to walk or to sit; and therefore to say these Actions are but the necessary Productions or Emanations of the Deity, is to say what I know to be false; which will be so far from persuading a Man, that it will only serve to enrage him. And lastly, This Opinion contradicts the common Sense and Experience of all Mankind. For if these continual Mutations, which we behold in the World, (as Generations, Corruptions, &c.) are but the necessary Exhibitions of the Deity, then they cannot be promoted or hindred by the Interposition of any Thing else; the contrary of which is manifestly evident. For how many Men are killed in the Wars, or Duels, by the Ambition or Malice of others? How many Animals (as Sheep, Hens,) have their Breed encouraged by Men, and many (as Wolfs and Lyons) diminished or destroyed? How many contribute to the Decrease of Mankind by a voluntary Celibacy, and how many towards the Increase of it by Marriage, or Polygamy? To say nothing of the Devastations made by God himself in Plagues, Earthquakes, Famines, and the like. So that these successive Generations are so far from being the necessary Effects of the Deity which he cannot alter himself;

self ; that they are liable to the Alterations of Thousands of his Creatures.

Nor is this Opinion of yours less repugnant to the *such & other Attributes of God*, his Impassibility, his Goodness, Wisdom, &c. We can never conceive a Notion of a God, that is subject to *Passion*, or *Pain*, or *Sickness*, or *Infirmitie*. But if we make the World to be *butes of God*, and all us Creatures to be Parts of him, we must make him liable to all these Weaknesses and Misfortunes. God must be sick, and God must be lame, God must be angry, and hungry, and thirsty, when any poor Men or Beasts are under these Circumstances. So it is impossible to think of a Deity, without being *Wise* and *Good*. But your Notion of God will make him guilty of all the Folly and Wickednes in the World. God must be circumvented and imposed upon, when any designing Creatures put Tricks upon their Fellows ; God must be guilty of all those Sillinesses and Inadvertencies, which foolish Men commit, and wise Men deride. Besides, this Notion will charge all the Wickedness in the World upon God ; it will not only make him to lend Assistance, but himself to commit all the Perjuries, Rapes, Whoredoms, and other Lewdnesses, which 'tis a Shame to mention. For if God be *every Thing*, then God does every Thing, not only those virtuous Actions which are the Subject of History and Panegyrick, but also those wicked and infamous ones which are known only in Goals and Stews. But to attribute these Things to God, which the most profligate Villains themselves are ashamed of, is a Blasphemy so loud and daring, that it shocks human Nature but to think of ; it sets a Man a trembling but to hear such an impious Assertion, tho' he should not consider all the horrid Consequences of it.

Phil. Pray, Sir, don't grow too warm upon a Point of Philosophy, for I have a great deal more of it for you yet. Have a care you do not fret your self too much upon the first Heat, for if you do, I foretel I shall win the Prize. Well ! but farther, says our old Philosopher, the circu-

Iar Figure and Motion of the World do demonstrate its Eternity ; for what is compos'd of a spherical Figure is on every Side equal, and consequently without beginning and ending ; and if the Motion be circular, it is conse-

* It is ve-
quently * *ἀπαράτης καὶ ἀδιέξοδος*, never to be gone through,
ry comical and never to have an end. Here is Logick for you.
to observe

how Mr. Blount has translated these two Words in *Ocellus*. He translates *ἀπαράτης* Stable ; but a stable Motion is a Bull, for 'tis as much as to say a Motion which stands, or is at rest. He renders *ἀδιέξοδος* by never shifting its former place. But who ever said Motion was in a place before ? for Place is only an Affection of Body, and 'tis as incongruous to say Motion changes its place, as to say a white or a green Motion. But besides, *ἀδιέξοδος* can never signify *never shifting place*, but that which has no Exit, or End. 'Tis a Metaphor taken from the Windings in a Wood, which Strangers go round and round in, and think they can never find their way out. Which is a very apt Simile of an eternal Motion.

Answ. to Cred. Logick ! Sir. No 'tis very poor Sophistry, 'tis Arg. V. meer quibbling upon Words. For what tolerable Consequence is there in your first Argument from the spherical Figure of the World ? Because a Sphere is without beginning, or ending ; therefore the World, which is Spherical, is so too. Does not every one know, when we say a Sphere is without beginning or ending, we mean one Thing ; and when we say God or the World is so, we mean another ? The one, we say, has no beginning or end in respect of Mensuration ; it is not of a long Figure, the Extremities of which we call the two Ends, at one of which we begin when we measure it ; but the Parts thereof lie equally distant from the Centre, it is neither long nor broad ; and if you measure it, there is no assign'd Part or End to begin at, but you may begin your Computation where you please ; and so in this Sense we say it has no Beginning or End. But when we say God or the World has no Beginning nor End, we mean it in respect of Duration ; that there shall be no Period of Time to bound their Being ; or their Nature, or Existence, never had a Beginning ; which is quite another Thing.

But granting you mean by this, that the spherical Figure of the World does infer the Perpetuity of its Motion, or Duration, the Argument is weak on all Sides. For 1st, that the Figure of the World is Spherical, is more *No Constat* than most will allow, or indeed any Body, but those who stick to the old Mumpsimus of solid Orbs. The Figure of the World, or Universe, may be square or oval, or *ricalness of the Universe.* any other Figure for ought that we know, as well as Spherical. The Figure indeed of so much of it, as appears to us, is a Sphere; but that is no more Argument that it is so, than that the Moon is a white yellowish shining Plate, about the bigness of the Crown of one's Hat, when she is at full. We see in the Day-time, that Arch of ragged Clouds hovering over our Heads, equally to the Eye distant from the Superficies of the Earth; which, with the refracted Rays of Light, that with a bleuish Colour fill up the Interstices, seem to form the half of a Sphere. And in the Night-time, we view a mighty Number of Stars, which, considering their Remoteness from the Earth, seem all equally distant, and so form an imaginary Sphere; as when by pricked Lines, we represent a Square or a Circle, as well as by continued ones. And this especially is represented more livelily and seemingly real, when the Interstices between the Stars are filled up with a pale scatter'd Light. And upon this Account it is, that we have in our Eyes the Image of a great white Hemisphere, studded with Stars. But this does no more conclude the World to be a Sphere, than the nine Pins set up by three and three, make a real Square, tho' we may conceive it to be one; or that Figure of the Part of any Object, which lies next to the Eye, and is seen by it, is the Figure of the whole, Part of which lies behind undiscerned. 2^{dly}, But granting the Universe was *That no Argument of a perpetual Motion.* Spherical, it would not from thence acquire a perpetual Motion. A spherical Figure makes a Thing move more easily, but it does not make it always move. For otherwise, Tops and Balls once put in Motion would never cease. Nay, should you only assert, that the Motion of the Parts of the Universe, the Earth, Planets, Sun and Stars,

Stars, is circular, and therefore they move eternally, the Consequence would be very false. And this Opinion is more rationally maintained by some modern Theists, who embrace the *Copernican* and *Cartesian* Hypothesis. But first, it will not be granted, that all the Parts of the Universe do move in a Circle; for 'tis plain that many of them move in an Ellipsis, and Comets in a Parabola. But secondly, tho' they did move circularly, they could not naturally move infinitely.

Phil. But give me Leave to interrupt you, before you go any farther. I thought you had been too much a Philosopher to deny, that a Thing once in Motion, without Impediment, would move infinitely. I know a Stone or an Arrow cannot move on infinitely, because of the Renitency of a gross Medium which hinders it; but what should hinder the Earth, the Sun, or any one of the Planets from doing so?

Cred. The Thing which you take for granted, that a Motion of Bodies in Contiguity with Bodies, always move, will remain a Question, 'till we know what Motion is, which we never shall. Indeed I will not absolutely deny, that a Body once moving in a Vacuum would ever cease: But this I will deny, that a Body moving in Contiguity with other Bodies, can naturally and of it self move infinitely. Now this Earth of ours, as all the other Planets and Stars, move or swim in the liquid Æther, which how fine and subtile soever it be, is still a Body. 'Tis needless to go to prove the Reality of this fluid Body, because (not to mention the Explosion and Crepitancy of nitro-sulphureous Bodies, Accension, and Fermentation, &c.) the Communication of Light from the remotest Stars do necessarily infer it; for go upon whatever Hypothesis you will to explain Illumination by, you must agree upon such an intermediate Body to convey it in. But it is most probable that Light is nothing else, but this intermediate Body, or the Æther; the Tremulation of which, arising from the original Luminous Body, and communicated from one Particle to another all along the Space, strikes at last upon the Organ, and makes in

in us the Idea of what we call Light. Now since this is a Body, it has the Property of Body, and that is Impenetrability, and consequently Resistibility ; and whatsoever resists another Body in Motion, either changes the Term of its Motion and returns it back again ; or else absorbs Part of its Motion ; both which are inconsistent with an equable eternal Motion. Now since the Earth, and every Planet, moves in the Æther, the Æther must some Way or other retard the Motion of it : For since it is not of Solidity enough to drive the Earth back, it must by continual tho' little Impulses, weaken its Motion ; and therefore the Motion of the Earth can never be eternal. It will not avail to say, that these Checks or Impulses of this fine Matter are but small and insignificant ; for tho' they be ever so small, they will in an Infinity of Time perfectly absorb the whole Motion of the Earth, or any other Planets, and leave them at last dead moveless Heaps of Matter. So that such a circular Motion is not naturally eternal ; nay that it is of any very long Continuance, it must be beholding to the conservative Providence of God, which we can give no natural Reason for.

2. Neither does a circular Figure contribute to the Du-spherical-
ration of the Substance or the Bulk of the World. In-
deed in a Hurly-burly of Matter, the jagged angular Pie-
ces are more apt to be broken, and their Parts knocked off
than the round ones ; all whose Parts are equally support-
ed. But the Case is otherways in Matter regularly mod-
elled, and where the Motion is methodically terminated.
For we see that an Apple or an Orange is much sooner
corrupted than a Flint, and yet generally the one is far
more circular than the other.

Phil. Indeed this is plausible Talk , but tho' this you have said should be sufficient to overthrow the Arguments I have urged for the eternity of the World ; yet it is no sufficient Proof, that the World is not Eternal ; for there may be better Arguments than these I have produced to establish this Opinion ; or if there were not, I should expect to hear something from you, to prove it to be other-
ways.

ways. For we find the World as it is, and we are like so to leave it ; so that we must conclude it always was such, until we see good Reason to think the contrary. Therefore the Proof, Sir, lies on your Side, and pray let us see if you can defend your Opinion better, than I have done mine.

Arguments against the Eternity of the World. *Cred.* You should not miscall that my Opinion, which is my Faith : but that shall break no Squares between us ; I will endeavour to defend this, as well as I can, by those Arguments, which, together with God's Grace, confirm me in it. You must not, Sir, expect, I should produce all those Arguments which are urged by Divines and Philosophers upon this Subject ; I shall only bring some few choice ones, which seem to have most Weight and Solidity. And,

Arg. I. From the Nature of Petrification. 1st, I shall prove the World is not eternal from the Nature of *Petrification*, or the Growth of Stones and other osseous Substances. It is granted by all, that Stones do grow ; and Philosophers have made it clear, that the Way of their Augmentation is by the Concretion of saline Particles, which, according to their Commixture with more or less terreous Matter, make them either fine as Adamants, or coarse as Pebbles and Free-Stone. Now by Experience we find it ; that these Concretions are so strangely durable, that hardly any Time is able to dissipate and dissolve them ; for the Marbles in the great Pyramid in *Egypt*, which lie inwards, and are not exposed to the Washings of the Rains, and the Frettings of the nitrous Air, are not in the least decayed, for all they have stood there so many thousand Years. Now if Stones do continually increase, and there be no sensible Decay of them ; upon Supposition that the World has continued from Eternity, the whole World would be turn'd by this time into one massy Rock by this eternal *Petrification* ; for many Ages ago the Earth would have been incultivable, at least Men must have made use of Crows and Mattocks, instead of Ploughs. And we may farther observe the Inclination of the Earth to *Petrification* in Places uninhabited or dispeopled, as particularly in *Palestine*, which formerly was

was a Place luxuriantly fruitful; but since by the Ravage of the *Romans* and the *Turks* the Inhabitants are so much thined, the Ground is grown stony and barren for want of Cultivation. I say for want of Cultivation; for Tillage does macerate and break the stony Earth again into a fine and kind Soil, which is fit for Vegetation; and therefore, in these cultivated Parts of the World, we are not so sensible of the increasing *Petrification*, as we are in the uncultivated ones. Besides, I am apt to fancy, that the Subsidency of the Sea, in most Parts of the World, is in some Measure owing to the employing a great Part of its saline Particles in the Production of Stones which are partly concreted out of them; for these thin Salts, which are from thence drawn up with the Mists and Rains, are the Principles of Petrification. Now this Argument may be farther improved, if we consider the Duration of *Ossaceous* and *Testaceous* Substances, far exceeding the Time of their Production. The Bones of Animals are produced in a little Time, and are not dissolved in a very great one. The Shells of Oysters, Mussels, &c. are concreted in one Year, and yet last many Thousands; as appears by those Beds of Shells we find in the Tops of Hills, which have lain there at least ever since the Deluge. So that to any inquisitive Man it is plain, that Nature is every Day more and more overtaking her self, and as it were treading upon her own Heels. For if the World had continued an Infinity of Time, we should have been all over-run with these *Ossaceous* and *Conchaceous* Substances, and no Matter left among us proper for Vegetation. And indeed we cannot but observe a Kind of Parsimony in Nature, as if she was afraid of this, by the speedy Corruption and Resolution of most Animals and Vegetables, by a natural Principle which we generally call Fermentation: For there is an active spirituous Matter lodged in the Composition of Plants, Flowers, Flesh, &c. which after the vital Principle is gone, does, by an agile internal Motion, shatter the Compagies in pieces, that Nature may make use of the Parts again for another Work: just as Printers are used to knock their Letters asunder, when the

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Sheet is wrought off. Now unless Nature was afraid of wanting a sufficient Stock of this fine Matter, and being reduced to the faxeous and unpliant, which she sees every Day to grow upon her; she cannot be supposed to make such precipitate Haste, in the Dissolution of her former Productions; especially when Animals and Vegetables are so inconsiderable a Part of the Buik of the Earth. I do not say, that this Increase of faxeous Matter is any great Inconvenience to the Earth already, or ever shall be, if it continues but some few thousand Years more, or that this is any Imperfection in this great Work of the Deity; for it is well enough contrived for a World of some thousand Years Duration, but not for an eternal one: The World will keep very well in repair for so short a Time; and therefore God Almighty does not see sufficient Reasons to amend these small Decays; just as we, when we have but a short Time in a House or Estate, take little Care to repair it, if it be like to last well enough out our Time.

Phil. Very Philosophick Divinity! what is your next Argument?

Cred. My next Argument I shall draw from the *Subsidence of Hills*, and the daily Landing up of the Sea; which are Things inconsistent with the Eternity of the World. For if the World has been from all Eternity, there could no where have been found such a Thing as a Hill; for Millions of Ages ago the highest Hills would have been all washed down into the Sea, and the Earth would have been reduced to an absolute Level; so that the Waters would have totally overflowed it, and rendred it uninhabitable. That the Hills are continually sinking, being washed down by the Rains, and oftentimes vast rocky Parts of them tumbled into the Vales by Storms, is undeniable to those that have seen the many great Stones, which lie at the Bottoms of Hills in *Wales* and *Switzerland*; to those that have observed some Parts of the Walls of old *Rome* to lie thirty or forty Foot under Ground, and other higher Parts of the City, as the Capitol, to have their Foundations wholly extant above-ground, and at the Bottom of the same Mountain, the triumphal

Arch

Arg. II.
From the
sinking of
Hills.

Arch of *Septimus* almost wholly overwhelmed in the Earth. Again, it is plain by Observation, that the Tops of many Towers of Churches have been seen of late from some Places, which they have formerly been hid from, by the Interposition of an high Hill, which since it has been partly washed down by the Rains, has discovered the Steeple, which for some Ages before lay hid ; nay, we can hardly see any old Building, but an hundred Years standing, that is built in low Ground, but we may observe the Foundations to lie much deeper than they were at first laid ; which can be nothing, but the Earth washed from the Hills and lodged there. So that we must needs grant, that the World is so far from having continued an Eternity of Time, or being like to continue so, that it is every Day more and more hastening to its Ruin by an Inundation. If it had been eternal, long ago the Hills would have been all sunk into the Valleys, the subsiding Earth would have choaked up the very Channels of the Seas, so that the whole World would have been one circumfused Ocean, or at least a noisome uninhabitable Marsh. To say this would be Millions of Ages coming to pass is nothing, for the longest Time bears no Proportion to Eternity : If a Dish of Water only once in a thousand Years were thrown upon Mount *Caucasus*, so as to come down just dirty, in an Eternity of Time it would have fetched down all that prodigious Mountain, and laid it as plain as a Bowling-Green. Now this one Argument is so plain and so demonstrative, that it is enough for ever to silence your Theistical Eternity of the World.

Phil. 'Tis time enough to triumph, when you have gained the Victory ; this Thunder-bolt has not struck us so perfectly dumb, but we have something to say for our selves yet. We will readily grant you, that an Eternity of Time would wash down all the Hills into a Level, but then that would not hinder the rise of new ones to supply the Defect of the old. For the Earth has a Quality of lifting up it self, or at least is elevated by Earthquakes, or subterraneous Flatus's into new Hills, when

the ancient ones are levelled ; so that there have been never wanting Mountains and Hills to drain off Rain from, to afford Matter for Fountains and Springs. Nor is this only a random Bolt without Ground, but is founded upon very good Authority. For *Ovid Met. Lib. 15.* gives an Account out of the Pythagorick Writers of a Hill by *Trezen*, in the *Peloponnes*, that was raised out of the plain Ground ; and in the last Age, in the Year 1538, a Hill now called *Monte de Cinere*, not far from *Puzzuolo*, the old *Puteoli*, was raised by an Earthquake ; and both * *Sirabo* and *Pliny* give an Account of several Islands being in the like manner raised in the Sea, which if they had been upon the Land, would have been esteemed Hills. 'Tis true, these Elevations are but seldom, because there is no Need in Nature that they should be more frequent, because a Hill is many Ages a washing down, and therefore if a Supply of a new one happen once in an Age, it is abundantly sufficient.

Cred. It is a great Sign of a thorough Confutation, when Men take Shelter in such mere Possibilities, that there is not the least Grain of Probability in. Because a small Hill or two have been raised by an Earthquake, why should we suppose all the Hills and Mountains in the World were so ? Because some Men die violent Deaths, therefore we may as well conclude none die natural ; because there are some monstrous Births, there are none born in the genuine Species. This is really, Sir, a mad random Way of arguing, which none will make use of, that have any Thing else to say. But to speak to your Instances, as to *Ovid's* Instance of the Hill by *Trezen*, that might in all Probability be nothing but a hear-say Story of the neighbouring People ; many Hundreds of such like we have amongst us here in *England*, and yet we should make mad Work of it, if we should go to philosophise upon them. The Poet does not give any greater Proof of this than he does of his other Fictions, and therefore it does not deserve any great Autho-

No new
Hills raised
which are
con-considera-
ble.

* *Strab. Geo. Lib. 1. Plin. Nat. Hist.*

rity. Besides he calls this but *Cumulus* a Hillock, on which not so much as a Tree grew,

*Est prope Pittheam Cumulus Trezena sine ulla
Arduis arboribus* —

And what is this to the Productions of such vast Mountains as *Caucasus* and the *Alps*? As to the other Instances out of *Strabo* and *Pliny*, every one knows what trust those Authors repose in Relations of common Fame, to say nothing of the Sincerity of the Authors themselves. But granting them true, they will not be able to support your Hypothesis as you shall see by and by. The Instance of the Hill by *Puzzuolo* is unexceptionable, and perhaps several others have been raised by the same Means. But then this is no very great Hill, it is but 100 Foot perpendicular at the most, and makes a great Sound under a Man's Feet that stamps upon it, as Mr. *Ray* who has been upon it does testify. So that this is but a thin tapering Hill, the Sides of which are so very slight, that it discovers the Hallowness within, which is not to be perceived in any other Hills; and therefore ought not to be brought as a Precedent, to prove the like Production of them. But granting this your Hypothesis true of the successive Rising of new and great Hills, and that subterraneous Accensions were of Force sufficient to raise up the *Alps* and *Pyrenees*; this will by no means agree to common Experience and Reason. For if this be the Way, by which the World maintains its Eternity, then all the Mountains in the World must Millions of Times have been washed down and blown up again into the Form we see them, so that they can be none of them absolutely solid, but the Sides and Tops supported in manner of an Arch. Upon this it follows, that the more coped and pyramidal any Hill is, the more hollow it is, and the Sides the thinner; for if the Ascension be made very deep in the Earth, and an Elevation follows, it will make a large Rise of mighty Circumference and

*Physico-
Theol. Dis-
courses on
the Chaos,
&c.*

imperceptible Ascent, of the Nature of an Island rather than a Hill. So that every Hill so generated must be very hollow, and the Rains by long washing, will at last wash away the Top and discover the Hollow. If this Hypothesis were true, to be sure some Time or other we should hear of Horses and Carriages breaking through the worn Crusts of some old moldering Mountains, and being absorbed in their Hollows ; if this were true, we should in many Places of the World, see only the Sides of the hollow Hills with their Tops dilapidated, which would appear nothing like a Hill, but like the ragged Walls of an old *Roman Amphitheater*, open at Top, and inclosed round with its Sides. Now because we see no such Appearances as these, in any Part of the World, which would most certainly come to pass, if this Hypothesis was true ; we must therefore in all Reason conclude, the Hypothesis is false, and that Mountains do not in this Manner decay, and rise as is here supposed.

Phil. Perhaps we may live in such Ages, when no such Dilapidations happen ; or the Hills might all or most rise together some few thousand Years ago, and so may not be out of Repair since.

Cred. And this is all but a perhaps. But we know the Productions and Reparations of Nature are not all together ; Men, Beasts, and Trees, are born, flourish, and die one after another continually, and so 'tis in all other Things ; and therefore 'tis incredible to think so many thousand Hills were produced so many thousands Years ago, and never an one since. Had not a Man better acquiesce in the Mosaick Account, than to involve himself in an Hypothesis, which is attended with all these Absurdities, and must be defended with such mere Possibilities ? *Credat Judens Apella.*

Phil. I will think more of this. What is your next Argument ?

Cred. My next Argument is drawn from the *Increase of Mankind*. If we look back into History, we shall find the World much thinner stocked with People than it

it is now. It appears by the Books of so late Writers as *Homer* and *Hesiod*, that Mankind generally in those Days led a Sort of a pastoral Life, and oftentimes changed their Abode from one Country, or one Part of a Country to another; which could not so frequently happen, if the World had been as populous as it is now; for then every Parcel of Land would be possessed by distinct Proprietors, who would not give Place to any new Comers. But in those Days, Countries had so thin a Stock of Inhabitants, that there was Land sufficient, not only for single Persons, but also for vast Colonies of Men; which before it was occupied by them lay *pro derelicto*, for any Body that would take it. There is nothing more famous in ancient History, than these Transmigrations of Inhabitants from one Country to another. Every one knows of *Cadmus*'s Plantation in *Bœotia*, of his Brother *Cilix*'s in *Cilicia*, of *Dido*'s in *Africa*; of the Colonies settled by *Evander*, *Aeneas*, and *Diomedes* in *Italy*; to say nothing of our *English Brute*, and the swarming Invasions of the *Saxons* and *Danes*, and an hundred other Instances. For there is hardly any Nation almost, but owes their Original to some Colony planted there, within the Reach of History. We may consider farther, what vast Woods have been destroyed to make Room for Inhabitants, as the World has increased; the vast *Hercynian* Wood in *Germany*, which took up so great a Part of that mighty Country, and that of *Arduenna* in *Gaul*. To consider farther, how mightily this Nation of ours has increased within a Century or two; notwithstanding the many civil and external Wars, and those vast Drains of People that have been made into our Plantations since the Discovery of *America*; how the City of *London* has doubled it self within these forty Years, notwithstanding the last great Plague; and how the Country has increased, tho' not in the like, yet in a considerable Proportion. Now to lay all this together, it is no less than Demonstration, that there has been a gradual Increase of the World for these 3000 Years, that it is far more populous now, than

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it was then, and that Nature inclines still more and more to augment the Stock : So that, though we should not grant the World a Being from all Eternity, but only suppose it was four or five thousand Years before the *Mosaical Account*; Mankind by this Time would have been perfectly wedged together, we should have swarmed every where with nothing but Men, most other Species would in all Probability have been eaten up for Food, and Men themselves would have lived, like Fishes, by snapping up one another.

Phil. By your good Leave, Sir, I cannot be brought to believe all this. For Nature does in a very prudent Manner provide against the excessive Stock of Mankind, by cutting off the exuberant Increase by Wars, Famines, and especially Plagues, and for ought I know, by Deluges, such as they tell us of *Dencalian* and *Noah*. So that tho' Mankind does for some Years seem to increase, yet it is always brought to the Level again, by some such mighty Devastation. For a great Plague or a Famine might destroy as much in one Year, as the World had increased in five thousand. And 'tis my Opinion, that the Eternity of the World is kept up by these successive Increases and Desolations. And there is very good Reason for this Opinion; because this gives a fair Account of the Use of Plagues and Famines in the World; for such prodigious Corruptions in the Air do not seem to be the pure Errors and Blunders of Nature; but to be wisely contrived to obviate the Inconveniences, which wou'd arise from an over-grown Stock; besides such Methods of Nature would seem cruel and unmerciful, unless she had a Design to serve, which was so very necessary, which Imputation is fairly taken away by this Hypothesis.

*The World
never depo-
pulated by
Plagues.*

Cred. But then your Hypothesis ought to be grounded upon some Reason or Experience, before you advance it; but it is so far from being founded on them, that it is contrary to the Reason and Experience of all Mankind. We have very good History of what has happened for three

three thousand Years last, and yet we never heard of any Devastation like this. The great Plague of that unparallelled one in the sixth Century, extend so all over the *Roman* Empire, for the Space of thirty Years, and that which happened in our City of *Lunnon* thirty Years ago, were indeed very severe Judgments of God, and made great Desolation among Men, but they were so far from making any such epidemical Devastation, as is here supposed, that they did not so much as overpoise the gradual Increase of one Generation. The ancient Histories are not so very punctual, to let us make a demonstrative Proof of this; but yet from these we may gather Arguments enough, to convince you of the Unreasonableness of this your Supposition. For what signified that great Plague in one City, and a few neighbouring Territories, to the mighty Increase of People, from *Cadmus's* Time? We find by *Thucydides's* History, that the *Athenians* carried on the *Peloponnesian War* vigorously, for all that; that they were far more annoyed by the yearly Incursions of the *Spartans* into *Attica*; and probably had as many Men lost, as by the Plague, which lasted but a short Time; but their War continued seven and twenty Years. We have no particular Account, what Number died of that Plague, or what Proportion of the People it swept away. It is probable, the Army suffered most when it was infected; because of their hard Fare and Lodging, and Lack of Attendance and Conveniences. And * *Thucydides* gives us a particular Account, what Proportion of that died by the Infection. For the Army under *Agnon* and *Theopompus*, which took Infection at the Siege of *Potidaea* was in all four thousand three hundred; whereof one thousand five hundred died of the Plague, which is but about a third Part; and we cannot suppose, that of the Citizens, who had better Care taken of them, there died half so many. So that a Plague so rare as this was, and so re-

Remarks upon the most remarkable Pestilences,

* *Thucyd. Hist. Lib. 2.*

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markable to all Ages, cutting off no greater a Number of Men, in so small a Circuit, could tend little to our universal Devastation. Indeed the Plague in the sixth Century, which was called the *Lues Inguinaria*, or the *Swelling in the Groin*, was more epidemical and of longer Continuance; for it lasted fifty Years, and swept away Multitudes of People, all over the * *Roman Empire*; and yet Mankind was very inconsiderably lessened by it, as appears by the swarming Incursions of *Huns, Lombards, Saxons, Saracens, &c.* in diverse Parts of the World, about that Time. As for our late Plague in *London*, we are able to make more particular Remarks upon that. There died in that dreadful Visitation according to the weekly Accounts of the Plague, in the Years 1665 and 1666, 70,544. Now the number of Inhabitants at that Time were about 510,000; for the common Bills of Mortality, at that Time, were yearly 17000 (since, by the Increase of the City, they are come to three or four and twenty thousand) which multiplied by thirty Years, the middle Computation of Life, gives the forefaid 510,000, of which the 70,544 which died, are about an eighth Part. Now *London* has been a Place, that has been mightily subject to Plagues; and if we consult our Histories, we shall find one there once in about five and twenty Years, tho' perhaps none so prodigiously sweeping as this last; but granting them all like this to take away the eighth Part of the Inhabitants, once in twenty-five Years; let us see what this will do, towards hindring the Increase of Mankind. Sir *William Petty* †, has very handsomly proved, that Mankind doubles it self once in three hundred and sixty Years. Now twenty-five being found fourteen Times in 360, the City of *London* must every five and twenty Years (the Period of the Plague) increase a fourteenth Part; but then the Plague cuts off an eighth Part, which is a great deal more than it gains; but then that fourteenth Part helps very

* *Evangr. Hist. Eccl.* † *Essay of the Multiplication of Mankind.*
conside-

considerably to make up the Loss. But when on the other Side, we consider the whole Country of *England* to contain ten Times as many People as the City, the Increase of the whole Nation, in five and twenty Years, will be a fourteenth Part complete (as being free from those Plagues) and in three hundred and sixty Years will absolutely double; so that here will be this prodigious Increase of ten Parts of the Nation, and the inconsiderable Decrease of but one, which is supplied by all the rest. So that the whole Nation lacks but $\frac{3}{7}$ of $\frac{1}{10}$ (which is not a twentieth Part) of doubling in the three hundred and sixty Years. And pray now, Sir, what are the Plagues of *London*, to this Augmentation? What is this inconsiderable Loss of one Part, to the Gain of all the rest? I am sure, Sir, if you were a Trader, you would look upon this as considerable Improvement, to have your Gains twenty, and your Losses but one.

Phil. I am afraid, Sir, that the Defenders of your Faith, will not thank you, for this fine Arithmetical Argument; for if once you come to this, we Infidels shall be too many for you. For settle the Increase of Mankind how you will, make the Period of doubling as large or as narrow as you please, you will find your Mosaical Account will stand miserably loose, upon that Bottom. Pray, Sir, for once, let me ask you a Question. How many Men do you probably conjecture, may there be now in the World? Guess how you will, more or less, and then you shall hear what I have to reply upon you.

Cred. The ingenious Gentleman I before-mentioned, reckons two hundred and thirty Millions; upon what Grounds I know not, for he does not mention them; but I compute there are three Times as many, and I think upon pretty good Grounds. The yearly Bills of Mortality, now at *London*, are about four and twenty thousand, which multiplied by thirty, the middle Term of Life, gives seven hundred and twenty thousand, the Number of the Inhabitants of the City; now *London* being by common Computation the eleventh Part of the Nation, The probable Number of Men in the World. that

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that seven hundred and twenty thousand, multiplied by eleven, gives 7,920,000, for the Inhabitants of the whole Nation, which is nigh eight Millions. Now I reckon moderately, that *Scotland* and *Ireland*, with all our adjacent Isles, are equal to *England*; so as to make in all about sixteen Millions. The Inhabitants of our Isles may by a moderate Computation be about a sixtieth Part of the World; but Sir *William Pettyt's* Computation makes them a twentieth, which is monstrously unproportionable, as will appear to any one, that thinks but upon *China* and *Tartary*, and the Empire of the *Mogul*; and I am afraid my Number is something of the least. Now multiply the former sixteen Millions by 60, and the Inhabitants of the World will be nine hundred and sixty Millions; which is just three Times as much as Sir *William Pettyt's* three hundred and twenty Millions.

	<i>Lond.</i>	700,000. 11.
	<i>Eng.</i>	720,000. 720,000.
	<i>Brit. Isles</i>	7,920,000. or, 8,000,000. 2.
	<i>The World</i>	16,000,000. 60
		960,000,000.

Phil. Indeed, Sir, I think your Computation may be pretty exact; and now be pleased to see, what horrible Work this Computation and your doubling Period will make together. Suppose you go backwards nine of your Periods of three hundred and sixty Years, reckoning this Year to be in the World nine hundred and sixty Millions; three hundred and sixty Years before this, *viz.* A. D. 1335, four hundred and eighty Millions; three hundred and sixty Years before that, A. D. 975, two hundred and forty Millions, &c. the ninth Period will fall upon the Year of the World one thousand four hundred and four, not long before the Return of the Children of *Israel* from *Egypt*; and then there were in the World according to this Computation, three Millions seven hundred and fifty thousand, which does but very ill agree with your Book of *Numbers*. For

Moses,

Moses, Numb. ii. 32. reckons of all the Tribes of the Children of *Israel*, that were able to bear Arms, 603,550, to which if we add the old Men, the Women, and the Children, they will treble the Number, so as to make 1,810,650; which is almost half the Number of the People then in the World, *viz.* 3,750,000, which it is pretty strange, that a Parcel of Fugitives out of *Egypt*, so inconsiderable a Corner of the World, should do. Besides, let us run back two Periods farther, and then we shall come within twenty or thirty Years of the Deluge, so that then there must be in the World nine hundred thirty seven thousand five hundred; a good round Company of *Noah's* Grand-Children, all to be born in nine and twenty Years at the most. I will not tire you any farther, to find out Armies for *Belus* and *Ninus*, so nigh the Flood; for upon this Computation, I am confident you will be hard put to it, to do it for *Xerxes* and *Hannibal*.

Cred. Sir, You go now upon a very great Mistake, as if I asserted that three hundred and sixty Years was the common Period of Doublings, for the Increase of the World, for all Ages of it. It is plain from History, that the Increase proceeds slower now than it did formerly. *Greece* increased more between the *Trojan* and the *Peloponnesian* War, than it has done since: So did *Italy* from *Æneas's* Time to the first Consuls. And if profane History would suffer us to go much higher, we should find the Increase still the quicker. Three hundred and sixty Years, I believe, is the Term of doubling now; it was formerly but half the Time, and at first not a quarter. Indeed it is very difficult to make an exact Table of this, and accurately to fix each different Period of Doubling; but Sir *William Petty* has attempted it in the aforesaid Essay, and for your farther Satisfaction thither I refer you.

Phil. Nay, pray, good Sir, excuse me now. This seems to be all Banter, a perfect *Popish* Nose of Wax. You make your Periods as you please, and Mankind must either double or treble as you have a Mind to it,

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to serve your Hypothesis. Sir, I believe the Generation, like the Age and Stature of Mankind, is governed by a steady unalterable Law, and is not to be turn'd about to go either fast or slow like a *Dukes-Place Clock*. I find all of you when you have but a new Hypothesis to advance, will take Nature as well as your Bibles by the Nose, and lead them which Way you please, to serve a Turn.

Cred. This is not, Sir, an empty Hypothesis, but a necessary Truth, to confute the Calumnies of Unbelievers against the Mosaical Books ; which is not only consonant to the Tenour of those Writings themselves, but to Experience and good Reasoning. There was a peculiar Blessing of Increase given to those first Ages after the Flood. *God blessed Noah and his Sons, and said unto them, be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the Earth, Gen. ix. 1.* And therefore, we Christians, who acknowledge the Authority of Divine Writ, are bound to believe this Blessing took Effect. Besides this is agreeable to all the Reason in the World, that the first Ages should be most prolifick, the World being to be stocked by a few Persons : For the World lay waste, till there were a considerable Number of Inhabitants born to cultivate it. Men wanted sufficient Associates and Assistants, and the Benefit of mutual Kindnesses and Artifices ; but when Mankind arrived to a competent Frequency, when the Earth was divided into distinct Proprieties, and Men were of sufficient Number to be serviceable to one another, there was not such Need of a multitudinous Production as was before ; and therefore, as the World was more peopled, the Increase did proportionably slacken. Besides, if the World had kept on its former Increase without Abatement, the Earth must have been over-stocked before this Time, or at least before the Time which God had allotted for it. Your Instances of Famines, Wars, and Deluges are only Assertions without Proof, and therefore I shall forbear speaking to them ; especially since we find they have done no great Mischief to the Increase of Mankind, as far as History goes,

This proved
by Script-
ure and
Reason.

Phil.

Phil. Have you any Thing farther to urge upon this Point?

Cred. Yes, Sir, The late Invention of Arts, and the Arg. IV. Shortness of the History of the World, are invincible Arguments against its Eternity. If the World was from Eternity, you must needs make them an eternal Race of the most stupid Blockheads imaginable, without the least Drachm almost of Wit, or Contrivance, or indeed common Sense; and that none of these Qualifications ever were known in the World, till within these two or three thousand Years last past. For there is hardly any useful Art or Science, but we know its Original and Progress, and its first Inventor, or at least its first Introducer into such a Part of the World; which were absolutely impossible to do, if there had been eternal Inhabitants there. For who can imagine, that amongst an Infinity of rational Men, after so many Millions of Hints and Opportunities, none should, before these last Ages, have lighted upon those ordinary Arts, which it was so uneasy to be without, and were so easy and apposite to be found? Could the World, or at least *Greece*, be from all Eternity, without the common Tools of the Carpenter, the Saw, the Augre, the Plane, and the Plumb-Line, till *Dædalus* had the Happiness to invent them? Did Mankind for ever live upon Roots and Herbs, till *Ceres*, or (which is all one) the *Ægyptian Isis* found out the sowing Wheat and Barley! How could they be Strangers to such easy Inventions as those of Wine and Honey, till *Bacchus* shewed them to the World? Should no one know how to cut and polish Stone till *Cadmus* taught it? How should the Art of Dialling be so late found out, to mention nothing of Clocks and Watches? The *Romans* had not so much as a Sun-Dial, till the second *Punic* War, and when they had one, they were forced to make use of that alone, being placed in the *Forum**, for an hundred and one Years; although *Pliny* tells us, it never went right all the time. What a sad Shift was poor King

* Plin. Nat. Hist. Lib. 7. Cap. 60.

Alfred put to, to measure the Hours by the * Burning of a Candle marked into twelve Parts ; and to be forced to invent the Lanthorn to secure it from the Wind of the Windows, because Glazing was not then in use ? I shall not trouble you with the Invention of Guns, Printing, &c. For, to be short, if the World be eternal, as you pretend, to be sure most of our Arts would have an higher Original than you see they have ; but it is monstrously incredible, that Mankind should have continued so many Millions of Ages, and never found out any Thing useful to themselves, but only in these latter Times.

Then as to the second Part of the Argument, who can imagine, if the World was eternal, that we should have no History above 3000 Years standing ; but that all the remarkable Acts of so many Millions of Ages should be buried in eternal Oblivion, and not the least Memoirs in History concerning them ? What unhappy Men were those eternal Inhabitants, to have all their Actions forgot, whilst History is crowded up with so many minute inconsiderable Actions, which have been done in a few Ages last past ? How should it come to pass, that in so many Myriads of Ages, only *Greece* it self should have afforded us nothing of History but a little poetick Banter, 'till the Time of *Herodotus* and *Thucydides* ? That *Egypt*, the School of *Greece*, not long before, knew nothing, but a silly hyperbolical Chronology, and some mystical Hieroglyphicks ? This is so strangely inconsistent with your pretended Eternity of the World, that it affords most evident Marks of the Lateness of it.

Phil. Your Argument from the late Invention of vulgar Arts is not so conclusive as you would make it : For those Arts which are supposed to be invented in these last Times, were in all Probability only revived after a long Time of Disuse, or they might have several Times been lost, and as many Times re-invented : Just as Painting in Glass has been lost for an Age or two, and now is by some Artificers, as is reported, re-gained in its ancient Per-

* Spelman in Vit. Alfr.

fection. So we have lost the Art of making Napkins which would burn off their Soil in the Fire instead of washing, made of the famous *Asbestos*, mentioned by *Pliny*, *Lib. 19. Cap. 1.* We know nothing of the Art of making Glass malleable, which was invented in *Tiberius's* Time, mentioned by the same Author, *Lib. 36. Cap. 26.* Therefore when they tell us of the Inventions of *Cadmus*, and *Ceres*, and *Dædalus*, we must esteem them only as the Retrievers of some former, altho' long disused Invention. As for your History-Argument, it is true *Lucretius* has bestowed some handsome Verses upon it ;

*Præterea si nulla fuit genitalis origo
Terrarum & Cœli, semperque eterna fuere ;
Cur supra bellum Thebanum & funera Trojæ
Non alias alii quoque res cecinere Poetæ ? &c.*

*If of the World there's no Original,
And if there always was this spacious All ;
How should we never hear a Poet's Lyre
Beyond the War of Thebes and Trojan Fire ?
What has of such renowned Acts became,
Ne'er to be enter'd in the Books of Fame ?*

But then this is a better Argument for a Poet than a Controvertist. Because we know well enough the Reason, why History describes but a few of those innumerable Ages to us ; which is, because the use of Letters is but a late Invention, and therefore it is no Wonder, that Men should not write Histories when they could not write at all. Had but the Inhabitants of the World, in those first Ages, been so happy as to have found out Writing before, the World would have been fill'd with History and Chronology ; we should have had *Æra's* upon *Æra's* for thousands of Years, even beyond your *Julian* Period ; nay your whole Epocha *ab An. Creationis*, would not have taken up so great a Part of that long Account, as that from the late great Frost does in the Almanack Chronology.

Cred.

No consider-
able
Arts lost
and revis-
ed again.

Cred. I will agree with you, Sir, that several Arts in the World have been lost, and others after a Time again revived; but then these have been such Arts as have been more curious than useful, and have rather been ornamental than beneficial to Mankind; and there has been some good Reason to be given of their Disuse, either by their growing out of Fashion, or by some more easy and commodious Invention. Thus the Art of Glass-painting was lost, about the Time of the Reformation, when the Images of Saints were not so highly esteemed, and Churches began to be more gravely adorned. Thus the Use of Archers in an Army has been laid aside, since the Invention of Pikes and Guns. But who can imagine, that the Art of the Smith and the Carpenter should ever be forgot after the first Invention? unless we could suppose that Houses and all Sorts of Utensils and Conveniences should grow out of Fashion, and it should be the Mode for Men to live like Colts and wild Asses. Unless Men could be supposed, to forget the Use of Eating and Drinking, I am confident they could never forget the Art of Ploughing and Sowing, and Pressing the Grape.

Mankind
could not,
as the The-
ists pretend,
have been
without
Writing
from all
Eternity.

But as for what you say, that the late Invention of Letters was the occasion of the Shortness of History, and the little Account we have of your supposed infinite Time, I desire you would be pleased to take this Answer. I look upon the Invention of Writing, or Letters, to be one of the most happy and noble Inventions which ever the World was blessed with; and the Person, whoever he were, that first lighted upon this admirable Art, I look upon, to have been a Man of a peculiar Genius and Wit, and to have made more Observation than all that had gone before him in some Ages. But then I look upon it next to impossible, that Mankind should have continued from all Eternity without the Invention of Writing, be it ever so happy, or if you please so fortuitous an Invention: For if the World be eternal, all Things must be as they are now; I mean Mankind must have been as sagacious an Animal as it is now, and as capable of finding out and improving Inventions; and if so, there being in an Eternity

tity of Time all Manner of possible Combinations of Matter, and casual Hits of Accidents, which are the Ground of all Inventions, no Art could possibly be uninvented in all that Time. So that if the Art of Writing were ever so casual an Invention, there must Millions of Millions of Hints be given for it, in all that time; but to say Mankind, all that while, never took Notice of them, is to make them, instead of the most sagacious, to be the most stupid Animals in the World. Which you will better assent to, when you consider that the Invention of Letters is not so much a fortuitous Hit, as a natural Deduction of good Reasoning. And, if you please, I will enlarge upon this something more than ordinary; because I find your Theists use to be mighty triumphant upon this Argument.

I take Writing only to be a Species of Painting or Imagery; and the Greeks very well express them both by the word *γέρον*. For as Painting or Imagery is a Representation of *Shapes* and *Actions*, so Writing is a Representation of *Words*. Now these Things are all that are naturally to be represented of Mankind, by outward Delineations, and the latter still is more difficult than the former. The first Essay of Imagery was in all Probability the simple Shapes of Men, Beasts, Flowers, &c. by a rude and imperfect Delineation, or Sculpture, either in a Plane, which the Greeks call Sciography, or a Solid, which we generally call Carving. The next Progress was to represent the Actions of the Body, as a Man running, striking, walking, kneeling; and of this, among the Greeks, *Dædalus* is reported to be the Author; for before him Statues were made with Hands falling down by the Sides, with Eyes shut, with Legs and Feet joined in the Nature of Pillars rather than Statues. Hence came the *Æra spicranta*, and the *Animare figuras*, &c. in the Poet's Descriptions of *Dædalus*. The next and most sublime Progress in the Graphical Art was to represent Words, which we call Writing. And this sort of Representation was much more difficult than the rest. For this was a Representation of an Image, or the Picture of another Representative; for

as Letters are the Representation of Words, so Words are the Representation of Thoughts ; and therefore it was a Matter of greater Difficulty, and required more Niceness and Exactnes to carry on the Imagery upon the Reflection. But this was not all, Shapes and Actions were to be seen by the Eye, and therefore their Images being painted, were easily discerned by the same Faculty : But Words were Things to be heard, and not to be seen ; and therefore it was far more difficult to *paint* them. They therefore, that made the first Essay to *paint* or *write* Words, must needs find it a very discouraging Task, to find Figures or Marks for so many thousand Words in a Language ; that would be too hard for Invention, and too troublesome for Memory. The Ingenious therefore first found out the Hieroglyphical Way of Writing, which did represent whole Sentences ; as a crowned Lion did represent a bold, strong, victorious King, a Fox a cunning one ; an Afs did denote Servitude, and a Sheep Folly. To these when there were added some few Notes for common Terms of Acting, such as Giving, Taking, Buying, Selling, &c. this was the Sum and *Acme* of the Hieroglyphical Way of Writing. Now this was a Way of Writing very troublesome and uncertain ; for the Figures and Marks must needs be very numerous, and yet not represent one Quarter of the Words in a Language, and therefore consequently very difficult to be unlocked. The only Way therefore to get rid of this Trouble, was to invent a few Marks which might represent all Manner of Words. And this was not very difficult to be attempted by those, who had made any Observation upon the Nature of Words. For such could easily determine, that altho' Words were ever so numerous, yet the elementary Parts which did compose them were but few. They might soon perceive, that all Words were but four or five Sounds diversly modulated by the Organs of the Mouth and Throat. The five Vowels are far easier to be distinguished than the Notes in Musick ; and the Consonants are not much more difficult. In the word *A-mo*, any one may perceive, the first Syllable is only a clear plain Sound

of

of the Breath through the Mouth ; and *mo* is only a hollow Sound modulated by the Lips. *Amor* is a Sound made by the same Organs, with a Regurgitation of the last vocal Sound to the Throat. From hence an ingenious Person may observe, that by the Modulation of these Sounds fourteen or fifteen Ways, by the repeating or transposing them all Manner of Words are made. And then he may very well conclude (when he has sufficiently distinguished these Sounds and Modulations) that by applying particular Marks or Letters to each of these, he may represent all Manner of Words, or write what he will with those few Characters. And I doubt not but this, or something very like, was the Reasoning of that admirable Person who first thought upon this noble Art. Indeed it is far easier to run along with this Thread of Thought after the Invention than before ; but to say that amongst so many Millions of ingenious Men in Millions of Ages, no one should ever have reasoned after this Manner, or have prosecuted this Hint successfully, is a Thing so very incredible, that we Christians have not Faith to believe. And this is all I have to say to you about the Eternity of the World ; so that now I am ready for your other Exceptions, if you have no more to reply upon this Head.

Phil. I think we have bandied this Subject about long enough, and I thank you kindly for your Arguments, which as you have urged them, have had that Force upon me, as to make me abandon my former Opinion of the World's Eternity, which indeed I never before thought so absurd as you have made it. But still, my dear Friend, I have some Dregs of a Doubt behind, whether it may not be many Thousands of Years, or perhaps Ages, older than you look upon it to be, if you go upon the *Mosaical* Account. For if we look into the ancient Computations of other Nations besides the *Jews*, we shall find prodigious Accounts of Time. For *Scaliger* (in his Book *de Emendat. Temp.* says *), that then (*A. D.* 1594.) the

* O. R. p. 226.

Chineses reckoned the World to have been eight hundred eightscore thousand and seventy three Years old ; and the * *Bramins* of *Gauzrat* said, that in the Year 1639, there had passed 326669 Ages. To this, if we add the excessive Computations of the *Egyptians* and *Chaldeans*, and the Inscriptions of ancient Marbles in some ancient Language which is now forgot, we cannot in any Probability allot the World so late an Original as the *Mosaical* Account does.

Cred. The Argument I urged before from the Increase of Mankind is as good against these excessive Computations, as it is against the Eternity of the World ; for granting the World so old as is here pretended, it would have been over-peopled long before now, as much as it would have been in an Eternity. So that if you allow the Cogency of the Argument in one Case, you must likewise in the other. But besides, the pure Assertions of Nations as to their Antiquity, without good History to support them, have always been very little regarded ; because it has been a constant Vanity in all Nations, to appear as old as they could. Hence the Inhabitants of every Country endeavoured what they were able, to be esteemed *Aὐλόχοοις* and *Indigenæ*, born out of their own Ground, or perpetual Inhabitants of it. And with how great a Zeal Nations have carried this Concern, we may make an Estimate of, by that pleasant Contention of the *Scythians* and *Ægyptians* in the second Book of *Justin*. As for the *Ægyptians*, *Diodorus Siculus*, who lived among them, interprets their vast Accounts of Time by Months or Lunary Years ; and so may the other be esteemed if there be any Truth in them at all. As for your old Inscriptions, such as that which they tell us is to be seen at *Caxumo* in *Æthiopia* ; that is easily to be accounted for, by the great Alteration of Kingdoms and Languages. For if the *Romans* after a few hundred Years could hardly read or understand their old Laws, what more can we expect from a few barbarous *Africans*, shut up from the rest of the World ?

Excessive Computations no Argument of the Eternity of the World.

Of the Mosaick Account of the Creation.

Phil. Well, Sir, I shall trouble you no more upon this Head, which has already taken up too great a Part of our Discourse. But I would fain see how you will get over our Objections against the *Mosaick* History of the Creation, which your Bibles begin with. For it seems to me to be such a Fardel of unphilosophical contradictory Talk, as is fit only for the Chimney-corner, instead of Witches and Apparitions. One would expect that when an inspired Prophet should go about to give an Account of the Origin of Things, he should do it in a noble philosophick Manner, as *Virgil* tells us of old *Silenus*.

— *Vti per inane coacta
Semina terrarum, animaque marisque fuissent
Et liquidi simul ignis : ut his exordia primis
Omnia, & ipse tener mundi concreverit orbis, &c. Ecl. 6.*

— *Show's how the Earth
By Atoms meeting in the Void had Birth :
What form'd the Soul, and what the Ocean made,
And how the liquid Flames a Being had :
From whence all these their native Forms had bore ;
And how the tender Globe was crusted o'er.*

But instead of this he only magisterially tells us, Things were so ; which any thinking Man, that does not suffer every Thing to pass upon him, is assured of the contrary of. For tho' your Arguments have convinced me of a temporary Production of the World, and that God some Time or other, perhaps not many thousand Years ago, did make it ; yet I can never believe, it was made in that Sort he would have it. For he makes the whole Universe, as well as this World, or Earth of ours, to be made at the same Time ; as if those prodigious Bodies of the Stars, and all the innumerable Furniture of those infinite Spaces, were made only to spangle round this little Speck of ours.

A CONFERENCE

He begins with a *In the beginning God created the Heaven and the Earth*; as if the Heaven bore any Proportion to this little poor earthly Atom. And again, *God made two great Lights, &c. he made the Stars also*; bringing in those innumerable prodigious Bodies, with a poor *also*, which are Millions of Times bigger than all the rest of the Creation. No, Sir, I have much more august Conceptions of the Deity, than to think he made such numerous and glorious Productions to dance Attendance to such a puny Point. For I look upon God to be a Being of infinite Power and Goodness (especially) as well as Duration; and therefore I cannot suppose he should lie snug within his own Happiness from all Eternity, and never display a Vein of his good Nature and communicative Kindness 'till within a few thousand Years last past. That Men should have such abject and narrow-spirited Thoughts of so diffusive a Goodness, raises in me such a Transport of Passion or Zeal, or what you please to call it; that the Names of Atheistical, Heretical, Papistical, and an hundred others, which your Folks are far'd at, don't seem to me half so impious and reflecting upon the Deity as this one Heterodoxy.

*Answer to
the Argu-
ment from
the late
Communi-
cation of
the Divine
Goodness.*

Cred. I am glad to find you have this Concern for God Almighty's Honour, as to appear thus zealous for it. But you should not be too cutragious at the sacred Prophet, for a Matter it is hard to prove him guilty of. For I look upon this his History of the Creation, to be the most noble Piece of Philosophy, which ever the World was acquainted with; and whenever there appear any Blemishes in it, it is only the Sully it has contracted from bad Interpreters. I confess the Generality of Divines, both ancient and modern, have thought the whole Universe was created in the Hexaemeron; because God is said to have then created *the Heaven and the Earth*, and because the Stars are mentioned in the fourth Day's Work. This Opinion has given indeed mighty Advantage to Atheistical Men, especially those who had any Taste of Philosophy, and had considered what a little Pittance of the Universe this Earth of ours was, for the sake of which

all

all Things seem'd, by this Account, to be framed at the same Time ; nay, this Point is supposed to have busied the Deity, more than all the rest. Now I shall take off the Force of this Prejudice when I shall have proved, that *Moses* does not assert the Stars to be any Part of the the *Adamical Creation* ; but that in all Probability that Creation was not extended beyond the Sun and the Planets. As for the first Verse in *Genesis*, where God is said to have created the *Heaven and the Earth*; it is plain that frequently in Scripture-Language the word *Heaven* does not signify more than the *Regions of the Air*; as when in the 20th Verse of this Chapter, the Fowls are said to *fly in the Firmament of Heaven*. The *Windows of Heaven*, Gen. vii. 11. The *Bottles of Heaven*, Job xxxviii. 37. (i. e.) the *Clouds*; The *hoary Frost of Heaven*, Job xxxviii. 29. and in an hundred other Places; where *Heaven* can be extended no farther than the Air. So that when God is said here to create the Heaven and the Earth, we cannot from hence conclude, that he then created every Thing in the vast extra-mundane Spaces; tho' the Vulgar do sometimes call all this by the Name of *Heaven*. But this is not the Knot of the Difficulty, the greatest Stress of the Objection lies upon the 16th Verse, where, among other Parts of the Creation, God is positively said to have made the Stars. *And God made two great Lights, the greater Light to rule the Day, and the lesser Light to rule the Night:* he made the Stars also, Gen. iii. 16. But the Text does not necessarily denote so much. Our English Translation interpolates the Words [*be made*] which are not in the Original; for the simple Translation of the Hebrew is only this: *And God made two great Lights, the greater Light to rule the Day, and the lesser Light to rule the Night, and the Stars.* So that here the word *Stars* seems to come in so very abruptly, and by the bye, that one would be apt to think, that it was clapt in by somebody else, after *Moses's* Time, who had a Mind to be mending his Hypothesis; or else was added as a marginal Note by some Rabbi, and so at length crept into the Text, as Father *Simon* has proved several others have done. And there

*The fixed
stars prob-
ably no
Part of the
Mehrick
Creation.*

Gen. iii. 16.
explained.

might be the more Countenance for this, when the *Jews* found themselves to have been so horribly plagued, for worshiping the Host of Heaven for Gods, when they were Creatures, tho' at the same Time they could not find any Account of their Creation among the other Parts of the Universe. This might be, to afford a Covert to such Idolaters, who might from hence infer the Stars to be uncreated Beings; which was fairly taken away, by adding such a Gloss in the Margin, or by taking it from thence into the Text, where the Transcriber could not think it reasonable it should be omitted. Now this is no very improbable Account, to any one who considers, how much by Head and Shoulders *and the Stars* comes in; if we take the common Interpretation of the Words. But I think we may give a better Interpretation of them, and that is this. The Words *and the Stars* are not to be referred to the word *made* in the beginning of the Verse, but to the word *Rule*, which immediately goes before, and are to be coupled not with the Sun and Moon, but the Night. *The lesser Light to rule the Night, and the Stars.* Whereby is denoted the peculiar Usefulness and Predominancy of the Moon, above all other Stars and Planets, in this Earth of ours: For this shines out, when they do but twinkle, and affords a mighty Influence in the Production and Growth of all Vegetables. So that upon this Account, she may very well be called the Ruler of the Night, and as it were *Prince* among the Stars. For as it appears to us, it is a glorious Planet, and a princely Light; and it is no Absurdity in the divine Legislator (as some will have it) in the literal Sense to call it a *Great Light*. For the admired *Plato* himself goes a pitch or two higher, and calls these two Luminaries *μεγάλοι Θεοί*, *The Great Gods, the Sun and the Moon*, Plat. Leg. Dial. 7. Now this Notion of the Words seems more rational; because the Moon's being Prince or Ruler among the Stars, or Governess of the Night, is the common Language of all People, and what every old Author almost is full of. *Tully* says, she was called *Diana*, because she made a Day of the Night, whilst all the other Stars did not make a *Twilight*,

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light, *Cic. de nat. Deorum, Lib. 2.* *Aeschylus* calls her ῥεόεσσον ἀρχήν, The Ancient, the Governess, or Mother of the Stars. *Aesc. ἑτα.* *Apollinaris* upon the *Psalms* calls her, ρυχίων βασίλεια ἀταξπῶν, The Queen of the nightly Paths. And *Synesius* in his Hymns styles her Πολυάννη ρυχίων δέαν, The Princess of the Nocturnal Gods. Which is agreeable to *Horace's Lucidum cœli decus* —

*Syderum regina bicornis audi
Roma puellas.* Hor. Ep. 18.

Virgil calls her likewise *Astrorum Decus, The Ornament of the Stars.* Virg. AEn. 6.

Seneca in his *Hippolytus* terms her

— *obscuri Dea clara Mundi, The bright Goddess of the obscure World;* and presently after, *Clarumque Cœli Sydus & noctis Decus, The bright Star of Heaven, and the Grace of the Night.* *Statins* terms her,

— *arcane moderatrix Cynthia noctis.
— The Moon the Governess of silent Night.* Theb. Lib. 10.

So *Manilius Astr. Lib. 2.*

— *Phœben imitantem lumina Fratris,
Semper, & in proprio regnante tempore noctis.*

*Phœbe that imitates her Brother's Light,
And reigns with her own Scepter of the Night.*

Now if we lay all this together, we can hardly suppose any other Sense of the Words, than that God made this lesser Light, the Moon, to be to us the Governess of the Night, and the Chief or Principal of the Stars. So that, Sir, now you see, here is no Complaint to be made of the narrow-spirited Doctrine of us Friends to *Moses*, and the Deity's chewing the Cud upon his own Happiness from all Eternity, as a Friend of yours unmannerly expresses it. You see now you are not stinted for Worlds, for the Communication

munication of the Divine Goodness; so that you may make half a Dozen out of every fixed Star if you think fit.

Phil. I thank you kindly for your Offer; but I never design to set up for a World-maker, for it is a very difficult Trade; and I am sorry there are so many Pretenders to it. But, by the Way, I am afraid that this little Piece of Criticism of yours will not hold Water. I do not pretend to be any great Critick in the Hebrew Tongue, but I think I am one good enough to understand that Text you have mentioned. The Words you have descended upon are *Veeth hacocavim*. Now I suppose any one that understands Hebrew, knows that the Particle *Eth* is a sign of the Accusative Case, and therefore *Eth hacocavim* must follow the Verb *jagnash*, made, which goes before, and not have any Relation to *lememsheleth*, which is a Substantive, and signifies *to the Dominion*. Now the Construction is very natural *lememsheleth halailah*; *for the Dominion of the Night*; but the Particle *Eth* makes the word *Hacocavim* quite of another Case, so that it must be referred to another Part of the Sentence; which can be no other than the Verb [*made*]; therefore the Stars are here said to be *made*, and not to be *governed*, as you would have them.

*Objection
against this
Interpreta-
tion an-
swered.*

Cred. Well, Sir, I see you have raised the only Objection which I was aware of: And I will endeavour to ward off the Blow as well as I can. It is very true that the Particle **תְ** doth most commonly signify the Person suffering, or is a Sign of the Accusative Case, but not always, for it is very often used otherways. Sometimes the word *Eth* is perfectly redundant, and signifies just nothing: As, Jer. iii. 37. *You shall go* (*me-eth-ze*) *from hence*, which is the same as *mizze*. Sometimes it is joined with the Nominative Case, as *Jer. xxxviii. 4. Let* (*Eth-haish*) *that Man die*. Sometimes it has the Signification of the Preposition *To*. As *Job xxvi. 4. Eth-mi,* *To whom hast thou uttered words?* Sometimes it signifies *From*, as *Gen. xliv. 4. They were gone* (*Eth-hagnir*) *out of* (*or from*) *the City*. Oftentimes it signifies *With*, as *2 Sam.*

xv. ii. Eth-Absalom, *With Absalom there went two hundred Men.* So Isa. vii. 17. *With the King of Assyria.* And Isa. xxiii. 17. *Shall commit Fornicator [eth] with all the Kingdoms of the World.* And in this last Sense I take the Particle to be used in the Text. *For the Government of the Night [veeth-hacocavim] together with the Stars; or and the Stars.* Which answers exactly to the like Construction, Neh. ix. 33. *We have done wickedly (veeth-malachenu) together with our Kings, or, We and our Kings have done wickedly.* This seems to me to be an Interpretation natural enough; and I doubt not but ancient Interpreters would have made use of it, had they been acquainted with those Improvements which have been made by modern Philosophy.

Phil. I find, *Credentius*, you entertain some *Nostrums* in Divinity, as well as I do. Well! I would not be in your Coat for a good deal, if you should vent these Notions to the World. And yet I could not chuse but laugh, to see what a Pack of systematical Divines you would have about your Ears. They would worry you into as Arrant an Atheist, as they do me. The Stars no Part of the *Zi osaick* Creation! Bless us! here is Divinity enough to raise up the Ghosts of old *Zanchy*, and *John Calvin*. 'Tis well, *Credentius*, you live in a philosophick Age, and a Time of Free-Thinking, or else we should see you in as sorrowful a Pickle, as the poor Bishop that was a Martyr for asserting the *Antipodes*.

Cred. Pray, Sir, leave off your Banter, we may be This Interpretation upon a more proper Subject. I do assure you, not prejudicial to Sir, I abhor advancing any Notion which should do the least Difservice to Religion, or which should turn to the least Diminution of God's Glory; but I think this Interpretation does neither, but rather the contrary: If it does not please others, I cannot help it; and if they will give me better Information, I am ready with all Humbleness and Submission to receive it.

Phil. The next Thing which dislikes me in the *Mosaical Account*, is this: That he makes Light before the Sun, which is a monstrous Absurdity: For the first Thing

* O. R. p. 68. Thing which he makes the Deity do, is to give out his *Fiat* for Light ; upon this notable Contrivance * I'll warrant you, for Fear God should be thought to work great Part of the Week in the dark. But how unintelligible a Thing is this Light without a Sun ! We may as well talk of Colours without Light, of Shadow without a Body, of an Accident without a Subject, of an Effect without a Cause, as to make Light in the World without a Sun. But to what manner of Purpose should it be ? Certainly God knew how to work without a Candle, and there was nothing else made (according to this Account) to see by it. Pray, Sir, unriddle this for me ; for I assure you this is one of the greatest Prejudices I have against the Mosaick Account.

Light before the Sun, is the clearing up of the Chaos.

Cred. Indeed this Difficulty has horribly puzzled Interpreters. The *Rabbins* who are used to be very fruitful for Invention, tell us the Sun was created the first Day, when the Light is said to be created, but is mentioned by Way of Repetition in the fourth Day. Others will have this Light to be a lucid Cloud, like that which went before the Children of *Israel* in the Wilderness, and moved round the World like the Sun, till that was created. But our Prophet need not be helped off with such silly Shifts as these. You know that *Darkness* has been in all Ages the chief Id'e*l* Men have had of a *Chaos*. Hence *Nox*, and *Erebus*, and *Tartarus*, have been the principal Part of the Description of it in the Poets and Philosophers. Therefore it should seem very agreeable to the Reason of Mankind, that the first Remove from the *Chaos* should be a Tendency to *Light*. Either all Mankind have been out in their Notion of a *Chaos*, or the Mosaick Hypothesis is very well contrived, to be so conformable to it. But by Light, as it was produced the first Day, must not be understood the Darting of Rays from a luminous Body, or the Trepidation of the intermediate Corpuscles between that and the Eye, which is the actual Light we enjoy now : But only the forming and adapting such tenuous Parts in such a Figure and Manner, as when such a luminous Body should be afterwards

wards created, they should convey Light to us, or raise that agreeable Sensation in us : Which I will the better explain to you by this Scheme, which I desire your Favour to look upon. It is my Opinion, that upon the first Formation, the whole Space of the *Magnus Orbis*, which is all that Space which is comprehended within the Circle which *Saturn* describes about the Sun, was the Bounds of the *Chaos*. For the other Planets, *Jupiter*, *Mars*, &c. which are contained within this Circle, bear so many Similitudes and Relations one to the other, and to our Earth, have the same common Luminary, the same Center, a like Form and Gravity, with many other Affections, which may be demonstrated of them, that to any reasonable Man they seem to be the Production of one Creation. If the Sun was not created till our Creation, as *Moses* says positively it was not, we cannot imagine that all the other Planets, till that was created, went rowling all in the dark, round an imaginary Point, to no Purpose. We must therefore assign them all one common Time of Creation, which must be the Mosaical. The *Chaos* therefore must be of equal Extent to the Creation, that is to take up all the Room within the aforesaid Circle. Now it seems most agreeable to Scripture, that this chaolick Matter was then first created out of nothing by God, *Heb.* xi. 3. compared with *2 Mac.* vii. 28. That original Creation therefore is represented in the *Figure I.* wherein is comprehended all the Matter in this solar World unformed and indigested, without Light or Motion. Either the Matter was not broke and attenuated, into those fine Corpuscles, which compose Light, or else they lay irretited and entangled with the Parts of dissimilar gross Substances mixed with them ; so as to make the whole Expansion resemble a great dark muddy Globe : So that by its Opaqueness it hindred the Light of the Stars, or any luminous Body, from passing thro' it. In this Condition, I suppose, the *Chaos* to have stood, when the *Fiat* for Light was given. And then when the divine Spirit, or the Wind of God made its *Incubation*, or Motion upon the Abyss, all the confused

stagnating

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stagnating Principles of Matter began to range into Order and Form ; the dull, heavy, terreneous Parts, which over-clouded the *Expansum*, had their Summons to retire to their respective Centres ; and they presently obeyed the Almighty's Orders, and Part thereof subsided to the Centre of the *Earth*, some to *Jupiter*, some to *Saturn*, and others to *Venus*, &c. till the Globes of those respective Planets were completed, and till the whole *Expansum* was cleared of these gross and opaque Parts of Matter, and of a muddy dark *Chaos* became a tenuous pell-mell Globe. This was the first Day's Work, and the Effect of that divine Effate, *Let there be Light*, Vid. Fig. II.

Phil. Ay, this is Divinity which agrees with my Tooth. Do but go on at this Rate, and I, like King *Agrippa*, shall be half a Christian at first Dash. I wish you could help out *Moses* at other Streights, as well as you have done here. But what say you to his Waters above the Firmament ? Is not this a pretty imaginary *Utopian* Ocean ? There is as much of the Philosophy of a Countryman in this, as you would expect to see. Poor Prophet ! he understood nothing of the Elevation of Vapours from the Sea, and the Condensation of them into Rains ; but very artificially makes a Repository-Pond for them, (like the New-River Water) in the Heavens, from whence the diverse Inhabitants of the World may be supplied with Rain, according as God pleases. Doth this look like Inspiration, or indeed like common Sense ? And yet we find a whole Day attributed, to this imaginary Work. Indeed it sometimes makes me laugh to think, how the poor Interpreters sweat, under this Difficulty. Some place these super-celestial Waters only in the Clouds, but then they know not how to get them thither ; for as yet there was no Sun to exhale them. Others carry them as high as the celestial Orbs, and make use of them there, for refrigerating the Heat of the Sun and Moon ; for Fear they should melt the solid Orbs. Thus *Theodoret* and *Procopius*, two very learned Men. *Bede* will have them there, to keep the Heat of the Sun from

from being too intense, and scorching us too much. But *Cornelius à Lapide* has found out a most admirable Use for them, which is this; to make Canals and Water-works, for the Blessed in the *Empyrean Heaven*. *Ut aquis hisce chrystallinis & variegatis oculos eorum pascat; aquæ enim omnis forma, decoris, coloris, & ornatus sunt capacissime, ut patet in Iride.* And for this he quotes the Revelations, *Shall lead them unto living Fountains of Water*, Rev. vii. 17. *And he shewed me a pure River of Water of Life, clear as Chrystral*, Rev. xxii. 1. Have not these Men, think you, pleasant Work of it, to be making such Ropes of Sand, and to go about to interpret that, which can have no tolerable Sense put upon it?

Cred. Your Prejudices transport you too far, *Philologus*; and Gentlemen of your Persuasion are too hasty, when they go about to dispute that out of the World, which they cannot assign the Use of. There are a many *Waters above the Firmament, the Waters of the Planets.* Plants and Drugs in the World, which we do not know the Use of; and yet it would be a Madness to deny their Existence. If by God's Word we are assured, there are such celestial Waters, it is to no Purpose to dispute the Use of them; for though we do not know it, God may. But perhaps there may be another Sense of the Words, than what is usually apprehended. *And God made the Firmament, and divided the Waters, which were under the Firmament, from the Waters, which were above the Firmament*, ver. 7. Now by the Firmament is generally, and I think very well understood, the Atmosphere of the Earth, or the Regions of the Air. All the Difficulty is, to find out what these celestial Water or Waters above the Air be. Now there is no Need to seek out Pools in the *Empyreum*; if we can find Waters nigher Home. Then, tell me, Sir, why may not the Waters which belong to each Planet, be these Waters above the Firmament? That the Moon has Waters analogous to our Seas, is demonstrable from the diverse Reflexion of Light from her different Parts, nay, from the very Shape of Seas and Islands we observe in her: And that the other Planets have the same, is highly probable from

from their Similitude to one another. Now I suppose, that before the Work of the second Day, all this planetary Water lay undistinguishably dispersed throughout the *Expanse*, and together with the *Aether* made up that pellucid Globe ; which was left by the Secession of the opaque and terreous Parts, that subsided to the seven respective Centers, and formed the Bodies of the Planets. The Work therefore of the second Day was, to make a Division of these Waters, to distribute them in proper Proportions to the several Planets : And in Obedience to God's Command, all the aqueous Parts of the great PELLUCID subsided towards the Centers of the Planets, and were circumfused about their Globes. Thus the *Expanse* was cleared off a second Time by the Subsideny of the aqueous and uninflammable Parts ; and left the PELLUCID to consist of a still finer and purer Substance, as you see described in the *Figure III.* Now this Subsideny of the aqueous Parts to the different Centers Moses calls *dividing the Waters under the Firmament, from the Waters which are above the Firmament.* The Waters under the Firmament, are the Waters of the Earth ; the Waters above the Firmament, are those of the Moon and other Planets ; which since the second Day's Work are distinguished, but lay confusedly dispersed in the *Expanse* before.

Phil. I protest, Sir, I am very well pleased with this Explication of yours ; this has engaged me to have a better Opinion of the Mosaick Hypothesis, than ever I had in my Life ; for it now seems to have something of Reason and Philosophy in it. But still there seem to be some Difficulties in this third Day's Work. For it is not easy to conceive, how all the Channels of the Seas should be hollowed out in one Day's Time, or what should be done with the Earth which was digged out of those Hollows. It should seem to require more than one Day's Time, for the Waters which covered the most inland Countries to run off from thence into those oceanal Channels. Pray, Sir, how do you get over these Difficulties ?

Cred.

Cred. This is, Sir, *in seirpo nodum querere*; to raise *The Seas* Doubts where there is not the least Appearance of any: For what a mighty Difficulty is it for God Almighty to hollow out the *Channels* of the *Seas* in one Day? If you and I were to get Workmen to do it in such a Time, it would be a very difficult Enterprize. But for God Almighty to do that in four and twenty Hours Time, by an Almighty Power, which he might, if he had pleased, have done in an Instant, is such a Wonder as no wise Man should be startled at. You see here this little Bit of Earth which I take out of this Border, I can in a Minute's Time mold it into what Form I will; I can make it round or oval, convex or hollow, or how I please; and may not we very well suppose, that God Almighty might, in as little Time, have formed Earth into what Figure he pleased? The Earth was then very flexible, its Parts being not then settled into its present Hardness, and therefore might easily be molded into any Figure whatsoever. But to wonder, how God could bring the Waters which covered the Inland Countries in one Day's Time into the *Chanel* of the *Sea*, is to me very strange: For why should God in his Creation be tied to the dull sluggish Motion of his Creatures, since Motion is demonstrated to be infinitely fast or slow, as God pleases? And why should we oblige him in his Works to any determinate Degree of it? We see the Waters move just such a Pace now; and therefore God must necessarily forsooth wait their Motions, and protract the Time of his Creation because of that. This, I am sure, is something of the Philosophy of a *Country-man*, as you call it: This is a true *Plebeian Hypothesis*, and something of Kin to that of *Horace*.

*Rusticus expectat dum labitur amnis; at ille
Labitur, & labetur in omne volubilis ævum.*

Phil. Pray, Sir, have a Care of insulting; for you are not got so clear off from this Day's Work yet. I am afraid you will have a deadly Rub in your Way, when I shall ask you, if it be not a little inconsistent in the *Mosaick*

Philosophy, to make the Trees and Herbs before the Sun? Upon this Hypothesis we may very well expect to find Orange-Trees and Melons in *Greenland*, when all Manner of Plants could grow where there never had been any Sun at all. Your Prophet had been a better Botanist, if he had but contriv'd to have post-poned his Herbage for one Day at least, for then the Sun might have brought them out thick and threefold; but for this cold, dark, watry Ground to be so prodigiously prolific, is so strangely unnatural, that methinks you should be ashamed to think of it.

Cred. I wender, Sir, you should expect, or talk of Nature in the Cration; for God was then *producing* Nature, and not acting according to it. He was then forming those Laws and Methods of Nature, but he could not be supposed to act by them, before he had formed them. But nevertheless, what Unnaturalness I pray was there in creating Plants before the Sun? If they had been created some Years before it, there would have been something in the Objection; but all this Time was but one poor Day. Now few Plants are so tender, but they will live as long a Time as that, without either *Sun*, or *Water*, or *Earth*. But these, being formed in the Earth the third Day, cannot be supposed to have died before the fourth, when the Sun began to shine upon them. But I cannot imagine, what Need there should be of the Sun for the Creation of Plants. Indeed there is very great Need of it in the natural Production of them, to open the Fibrēs, to elevate the Juices, to unfold the Coats and Leaves of the Embryon Plant in the Seed. But here were no precedent Coats and Leaves to be unfolded; for God then formed the Plants immediately out of the common Matter, so that the Seed was the Production of those first Plants, and not the Parent of them. *And God said, let the Earth bring forth Grass and Herb yielding Seed after his Kind, and the Tree yielding Fruit, whose Seed was in it self, after his Kind,* Gen. i. 12. But granting a vital Warmth should be requisite, for the Production of these primitive Plants; it could not be wanting in the new Earth: For the terreous Parts of

Trees and
Plants
might easily
grow before
the Sun
was made.

Matter

Matter having been agitated in the Chaos by such a rapid Motion, and having subsided to the Center from such distant Parts of the *Expansum* with so great a Celerity, they must needs have contracted an extraordinary Heat, much more than is requisite for the ordinary Production of Plants; nay, as we may probably conjecture, a Heat nigh to an Inflammation: Which perhaps might have been the Cause, why the Waters were circumfused first round the Globe, when God might as easily have made them at first to settle into their Channels; but only to temper the Heat of the agitated Particles. Now, Sir, if one was to measure the Method of the Creation by the *Virtuoso's* Rules, methinks we should never have any Recourse to the Sun for the Production of Plants; for he produces them at a slow tedious Rate, the Herbs once in a Year, and the Trees in a much longer Time. But here was to be a Plantation of the whole World in half a Day's Time, and therefore there was Need of a more speedy Production. Now the new Earth, warm yet by its late Agitation, and impregnated with the Moisture of the circumfused Waters, would make a Kind of a warm Bed (to speak in your Way) for the hasty Production of Plants, and might raise up all the Herbage of the World as quick as *Jonah's Gourd*, or a chymical Sallad. So that I should rather think, the Gentlemen of your Way, instead of finding Fault with *Moses* for a *Plebeian Philosopher*, should admire him for an excellent *Virtuoso*.

Phil. Now I have something to say to the fourth Day's Work; according to *Moses's Hypothesis*, the Deity must bestir himself this Day more than ordinary: For Sun, Moon, and Stars, are a very considerable Job of Work for one Day, especially when the Furniture of our poor Earth took up so many. Indeed you have handsomely removed the Difficulty of the fixed Stars; but then even each of those six Planets which remain, would require as long a Time for their Formation as this our Earth, because they are of the same Form, and as we have Reason to believe, their Equipage is not very unlike. Therefore I cannot be reconciled to your Prophet, for crowding

the Formation of all these into one Day. Besides, I cannot see, how the Relation of this Day's Work agrees with the Explication in your Scheme. For if the Planets were formed by the first Secretion of Matter upon the first Day, how can they be made the fourth? The *Expansum* before this Time seems to be drained of all Matter but the *Æther*; and therefore I am at a Loss to find, what the Sun could be made of. This does to me seem something dark and mysterious, and requires a little of your Art, *Credentias*, to clear it up.

Cred. This Objection, Sir, is a little complicated, and therefore I shall answer to the Parts of it distinctly.

How the Planets are said to be made the fourth Day. 1. Whereas you suppose that all the Planets were formed this fourth Day, and had all those Ornaments they are probably endowed with then bestowed on them; this is more than can from Scripture be inferred. It is not improbable, that God Almighty wrought them all off one as soon as the other, and that they grew on to Perfection by the same Degrees; so that the Work of each of them was going forwards, from the first to the sixth Day. For all these Planets are so mutually linked to one another, and are so much of the same Piece, that one cannot easily suppose the Formation of any of them was distinct from that of another. Now tho' the Bulk of these Planets were formed before this Day, and in all Probability some of their ornamental Parts, as perhaps their Seas and their Plants; yet they are said to be *made* the fourth Day, because they were then *made* the Moon and the erratic Stars to us. They were before only invisible Globes; but by the Light of the Sun, which was this Day created, they became conspicuous, and reflected upon the Earth a bright shining Light, which they borrowed from thence. Thence they are very properly said to be *made*, because tho' their Substance was before, yet they were not a Moon, or Stars. For the *formal Reason* which does constitute a Moon, is its Reflexion of Light in such constant Vicissitudes, its different Phases, &c. which is the Notion the Generality of Mankind frames of the Moon; now this it had not till the *fourth Day*, and

and therefore is very properly said to be *made*. For *facere* in the Latin Tongue has its Derivation from *novans faciem induere*; so that a Thing is then said to be made, when it has another Appearance than it had before. Neither is the original Word, *gnasah*, which is used here much different: For that signifies not only any new Formation, but any new Use or outward Appearance of a Thing. For sometimes it signifies to Sacrifice, as the Latin Verb *facere*; so *Exod. x. 25.* that we may *make* or *sacrifice unto the Lord our God*. So *Psal. lxvi. 15.* *I will make to thee an Ox with Goats*: Which is a much bolder Metaphor than that of *Virgil*, *Cum faciam vituli pro frugibus*. Now it is plain here, that the Sacrifice was made before; only the new offering it up, or dedicating it to a religious Use, is termed *making*. So *Numbers ix. 10.* it is termed *making a Passover unto the Lord*, where only the Observation of a Time already made is termed *making*. So *1 Kings xii. 32.* *Jeroboam is said to make the high Places*; and *Chap. xxv. 32.* *Ahab made a Grove*. Now God Almighty had made those Hills and Groves before; only those wicked Princes dedicated them to those Idolatrous Uses. The Planets therefore, and especially the Moon, are very properly said to be made this fourth Day; because they made their first *Appearance* upon this Day to the Earth, they had then their first *Use* put upon them of being Luminaries to this World.

2. Altho' each of these Planets might take up as much *Time* in its Formation as our Earth, yet *Moses* is not to be blamed for not relating distinctly the Formation of them. It is enough for his Purpose to give an Account exactly of the sublunary Creation, and not to trouble the People's Heads with Astronomical Niceties. His Business was to give them an Account of their Original from God, the better to keep them from Idolatry, and to relate to them the Creation of the World, so far as was agreeable to Truth, and conformable to their Capacities. To give them a false System of the Creation, such as simple People are apt to fancy, is to make God a Liar, nay, to confirm with his Authority the idle Dreams of Men. And

Why Moses relates the distinct Formation of the Earth alone,

to give them a full Account of the true System, was to confound their Thoughts, and it may be to destroy their Faith; to make them disbelieve those plain Notions, they did understand, for the sake of those others, they could have no Apprehension of. To have given them a false System of the World, to comply with their simple Capacities, would have been to have declared himself an Impostor, to all understanding Men; and to have particularly unfolded all the *Phænomena* of the true one, would have been only to have appeared frantick, to such an illiterate Generation: For it was *Moses's* Business to establish a true Religion agreeable to the Divine Will, and to conduct the *Israelites* into the Land of *Canaan*, where they might have a free Exercise of it; but it was the least of his Design, to perplex them with physiological Notions; so that for him to have talked of planetary *Vortices* of the Centrality of the Sun, and a World in the Moon, would have made the poor *Jews* have suspected, the Land of Promise was but some such Kind of philosophical Romance. God Almighty, when he dictated this most admirable History to his Prophet *Moses*, foresaw that this was to be the Ground-work of his future Revelations; that upon the Belief of this Creation by God, the Fall by *Adam*, and the Reparation made by Jesus Christ, all Mankind was to be saved; so that if he had descended to the Particulars of Philosophy, and sided with any distinct Sect of it, he would have laid a very great Stumbling-block in the Way of Salvation; if he had explained the Particulars of the Creation in the *Ptolemaick* Way, all the refractory *Copernicans* and *Tycho Braheans*, must have been damned; or if he had took Part with *Copernicus*, all the old-fashioned Gentlemen, that are Advocates for the round-about Stars and the solid Orbs, would be in as evil a Condition. *Moses* therefore, by God's Direction, took the middle and the wisest Course, to speak exact Truth, but seasonably and cautiously; neither to confound the Minds of the ignorant *Jews*, nor to expose himself to philosophizing Christians. I doubt not, but *Moses*, being educated in all the Learning of the *Ægyptians*,

Egyptians, was well versed in the vulgar, or what is usually called the *Ptolemaick Hypothesis*; for that came into *Greece* from *Egypt*; but that he should not explain his History of the Creation according to this System, and shew some particular Marks of his Notions lying this Way, is a Thing very unaccountable, and does seem to denote a particular Providence of God, over-ruling this inspired Person, in relating Matters almost contrary to his own Sentiments, for Reasons best known to the Divine Wisdom.

3. But lastly, to make this agree with the Scheme I shew'd you, I think no very great Labour is requisite: For I supposed in the first Day's Work, that the *Expansum*, or the Space of the *Magnus Orbis*, was drained of all its opaque and terrene Matter; in the second Day it was fined again, by drawing off all its aqueous uninflammable Matter; but besides these, in all natural Bodies we find an unctuous inflammable Substance, which did here remain still diffused throughout the whole *Expansum*; which upon the Command of the Divine Word, subsided to the central Point of the whole *Magnus Orbis*; all which vast Quantity of unctuous Matter, being compacted together into one Globe, broke out that Day into the *solar Flame*. Vid. Fig. V.

And now the *Expansum* was reduced to a pure liquid *Aether*, being utterly divested of all gross and heterogeneous Parts of Matter, and exquisitely fitted for the Planets to swim about in; and not only so, but was perfectly cleared of all clogging irretiting Particles, so that it could communicate a *Tremor* throughout its whole Diameter with the greatest Velocity. It is probable, that before this third refining of the *Expansum*, and the draining it of the unctuous Matter, which made the solar Globe, the *Aether* was in some Measure clogged with those unctuous Particles, so that it could not so easily communicate a Light from a slender or a remote Luminary, for Want of a quick Trepidation; which when they were removed to the Globe of the Sun, it could then do with very great Readiness. So that I very much question, if upon the third Day, an Eye had been placed in any Part of the

This Relation agrees with the foresaid Hypothesis.

A CONFERENCE

Expanse, altho' it should be out of the thick Streams of the Planets, it could have seen the fixed Stars; because the slender Force of the Light of such distant Bodies could hardly have made Force enough, to communicate a Trepidation through so much Space, where the Matter did not seem enough fin'd for it: For to produce the Communication of Light, Matter must be framed to a peculiar Contexture and admirable Fineness, and set to a Sort of an *Equilibrium*, so as to be moved by the least Touch; which it could not well be, before this third Refining upon the fourth Day. As soon as which was done, the Light of the Stars appeared in all Parts of the *Expanse*, where-ever it was not over-powered by the vigorous Rays of the nigher Sun; so that hence-forward they constantly shone in their proper Vicissitudes, throughout all the Cones of the Shadows of the several Planets. Therefore upon this Account, in some Sense likewise, the fixed Stars might be said to be made this Day, because of their first Appearance to the Earth, tho' they had their Formation many Ages before. Altho' some perhaps will think the Metaphor is something hard strained this Way, and therefore I apply it principally to the Moon, who received her first Phasis from the Sun this Day; which may be very properly termed her Formation, because they are those Phases which do denominate her a Moon in respect of us. It was this Day that the Moon began her nocturnal Regency; it was now that by her borrowed Light from the Sun, by reason of her Vicinity to the Earth, she out-shone to us all those fixed Stars at a Distance, which shine with such prodigious Globes of their own Light.

Phil. I do assure you, *Credentius*, I can receive either of your Explications, concerning the Formation of the Stars, as well as what I find in your Commentators upon the Points; for there is some Degree of Probability in either. But I had rather take any Thing for granted, than own the fixed Stars to come in for one Job of Work, in this puny Creation. As for the fifth Day's Work, I shall pass over that, for I do not find any great Absurdity therein; but there are several Things in the sixth Day,

which

which will never go down with me : For *Moses* then seems to make the whole World to be stocked with one Pair of Animals of each Sort, or to be sure he makes but one Man and one Woman to people all the Earth, which is monstrously absurd : For any common Observer of Nature may take Notice, how careful she is for the Propagation of Kinds ; that she is rather guilty of a Superfecundation, than a Parsimony this Way. How many Millions of Acorns doth one single Oak produce, during the Time of its Standing, any one of which is capable of renewing its Species ? Not to mention the *Polypodium*, and such other super-abundantly fruitful Plants, there is not an Apple, or a Pear-Tree, but what produces ten thousand Times more Kernels, than what is absolutely necessary. And if the Hypothesis of Mr. *Lewenhoeck* be true, as I never saw any good Reason to the contrary, that the *Fætus* is produced from an Animalcule in the Sperm of the Male, what Myriads of these are produced every Coition ? Therefore whereas Nature is so over and above careful in the Propagation of Kinds, when she is in a manner profuse in the Production of Seeds, that she may be sure to obviate all Manner of Contingencies and Lets which could possibly happen ; how can we suppose, that she acted by such contrary Methods, in the first Formation of Things ? If there were but Two of a Sort created, upon what miserable Uncertainties did the Perfection of the Universe depend ? If any one Male or Female had died before it had produced its Kind, there had been a Species lost for ever. Nay, a Lion, a Bear, or a Wolf, might have eaten up half a Score of some Species, for a Breakfast. If *Adam* had been as much a Villain as his Son *Cain*, he might have served his Wife as *Cain* did his Brother. They might each or both, have been devoured by some wild Beast, they might have fell from a Tree, or a Precipice, or into a River, they might have been poisoned by some venomous Plant, or Animal, or lastly, *Eve* might have died in her first Child-Birth. Now if any of these Things had happened, the Deity had been put to the Trouble of a new Creation. Most certainly, therefore,

fore, since God Almighty does take such abundant Care for the Propagation of each single *Individuum*, he would never leave a whole Species to such a Number of Casualties. If such a Number of superfluous Animalcules are produced for the Formation of one *Fœtus*, when Nature takes such mighty Care to produce with the more Certainty one single Effect ; how can we suppose, that she should leave the whole human Species liable to be destroyed by so many Accidents ? This is not at all reasonable, *Credentius*, let your Bibles say what they will. Besides, I cannot imagine, how all the World should be peopled by these Two. How could their Progeny get into *America*, whose Inhabitants seem coæval with the Land it self ? How could the Blacks and Whites have one common Parent ? They seem to be diverse Kinds of Men, and a White can no more beget a Black, than a Bull can beget a Boar. Pray, Sir, afford us a Cast of your Subtilty, to evade these Difficulties.

Cred. I confess, *Philologus*, there is in this Argument a philosophical Prettiness, and that is all ; such as will take with some of the *Virtuoso* Part of the World, who prefer an Experiment to a Revelation, but it does not so with me ; for I have learned to make my Philosophy strike Sail to my Faith, and to think that Omnipotency can do that, which ordinary Nature is at a Loss for. But, as I have observed before, you philosophical Gentlemen do not argue justly, when you argue from the ordinary and *conservative*, to the *creative* Power of God ; that God must have done so and so in the Formation of the World, because he does so in the Conservation of it : For the Reasons of both these are very different. Then *Omnipotence* chiefly employ'd it self, but here is the Province for *Wisdom* : then God acted absolutely by an uncontrollable *Power*, but now he has in some Measure given the Reins out of his own Hand, he has in many Degrees made over his original Power to his Creatures, and left it to the Determination of Free-will, and oftentimes to the Lets and Impediments of what we call casual Events. So that it was very wisely contrived of the Deity, after the Alienation

God acted
by other
Methods in
the Crea-
tion than
now.

tion of this original Power, to be more abundantly cautious in the Production of Species, when the Power of Production was delivered up to other Hands. Whilst God Almighty made all Things by his absolute creative Power, his Almighty *Fiat* could not but produce a *necessary Effect*; but when he delivered this over to second Causes which acted but weakly, and sometimes corruptly, there was then Need that he should make more ample Provision for the Propagation of Species, and for the Prevention of Miscarriages in their Production, when the immediate Causes were not omnipotent. To make this plainer yet to you, by a familiar Instance. You know, Sir, you have the Happiness to be an exquisite Mathematician, and particularly you understand the Art of Gunnery, so as you can, unless some extraordinary Chance does intervene, hit, or come very nigh the Mark you shall design, by the Discharge of a Piece of Ordnance. Now you being so excellent this Way, you would not perhaps provide for your self more than one single Ball for this Purpose; but if you was to order a young Practitioner, or one perfectly ignorant of this Art, to do this, one that knew nothing of the Bore, or the Length of his Piece, or the Strength of his Powder; one that could make no Estimate of the Distance or Height of the Object, or the Resistancy of the *Medium*; you must allow him a far larger Quantity of Ball and Powder, that he by random Shots may effect that, which you do at once by Demonstration. The Application is easy. Θεός γνωστεῖ, God is the Mathematician; he in the first Creation of the World, acted himself in lieu of Nature, till Nature came to be settled, and was able to shift for it self; his omnipotent uncontrollable Power did not withdraw it self, but continued with a particular over-ruling Providence, to take Care of the Species, till such Time as, by their Numbers, they were able to encounter with extraordinary Contingencies. And this is evident from the great Care God took of the first Pair of Mankind, *Adam* and *Eve*, by placing them before the Fall in a Garden so delicately adorned, and afterwards by providing them Coats

*He then
took an im-
mediate
Care of the
Species.*

of

Coats of Skins, Gen. iii. 21. Now when God Almighty designed to take such particular Care of the Archetypal Pair, he might easily enough secure their Productions from all Casualties, and stock the World as well by one Pair, as by ten Thousand ; but when he thought fit to withdraw this peculiar Providence, and leave Generation to second Causes, there was then a more especial Need of a *superfæcundity*, than there was before. But after all, it is no Way apparent from the *Mosaick* Relation, that God produced but one Pair of all Kinds of living Creatures, besides Man ; the Scripture says, *Male and Female created he them* ; but how many Males and how many Females is uncertain. It does not follow they were but two, because Mankind were no more ; for there might be very weighty Reason in the divine Fore-knowledge relating to our Redemption, why Mankind should proceed from one Original ; which does no Ways hold as to Brutes. Therefore to deduce Absurdities from what *Moses* does not say, is to do great Injury to the Character of his sacred Person, without any the least Ground.

Americans
of the same
Stock, tho'
black, with
the rest of
the World.

2. As to what you object, concerning the *Americans*, I cannot see why that should be any more an Argument against the common Parentage of Mankind, than the Inhabitants of *Britain*, *Madagascar*, or any other Islands are. For I suppose the Inhabitants came thither in Ships and Boats, as they did into Islands more adjacent to the Shore. I think there is no Need, with the * learned Mr. *Fuller* in his Miscellanies, to allow the Ancients the Knowledge of the Compass, so that the first Colonies might have a more easy and ready Voyage thither ; for it's plain, this is a very modern Invention, and it is possible enough that People might get into *America* from any Part of the Continent, without this Art. It is probable, that the Northern Part of *America*, at least, was peopled (as *Grotius* supposes) by Colonies from the Northern Parts of *Europe*, by Way of *Iceland* and *Greenland* ; the West, and some Part of the South, as *California*, *Peru*, *Chili*, &c.

How Inha-
bitants got
into Ame-
rica.

* Misc. Lib. 4. Cap. 19.

had its Inhabitants from the *East-Indies*, the many intermediate Islands facilitating their Passage, without any great Skill in Navigation; the remaining Part might be stocked from *Spain* and *Africa*, by Way of the *Canaries*, *Azores*, or *Hesperides*. To think it impossible for any such Voyage to be made without the Help of the Compass, is very absurd, for the Ancients made many as difficult ones, some Thousands of Years before that Instrument was thought of. For I look upon Navigation to be an Art rather revived than improved in these two last Centuries. It was the *Roman* Conquest throughout the World, that put a Stop to this noble Art; for the *Phoenicians* and *Carthaginians* were more expert in this, than ever the *Romans* could pretend to. Nor did they ever indeed in good Earnest bend their Minds to this Art; for their chiefest Aim was to advance their Empire in the Continent; and the Fleets they fitted out were chiefly Transports for their Forces, except once or twice, when they were forced to Naval Fights by some potent Enemies at Sea; but they rarely, or never employ'd Ships for foreign Negotiations and Discoveries. So that it is no Wonder, we should have been deprived of all Intercourse with *America*, during the Power of that Empire, and those Ages of Barbarity which ensued it. But long before *Cæsar*, the *Phoenicians* made Voyages for Tin and Lead into *Britain*, which is so vast a Distance from your Country, whence the *British* Isles got the Name of *Cassiterides*. The Navigations and the *Periplus* of *Hanno* the *Carthaginian* are sufficiently famous, who coasted round *Africk* by the Order of the *Carthaginian* Senate; and he lived considerably before the Time of *Darius Nothus*, as *Isaac Vossius* has made appear. It is plain, that the Ancients sailed up the *African* Sea, as far as *Madagascar*, called *Menuthias*, or the Greater *Cerne*, as some will have it; but I believe, as far as *Ceylon* or *Sumatra*; for 'tis most probable, that *Pliny* means one of those Islands, and not *Madagascar*, by the Name of *Cerne*. For he describes *Cerne* an Island over against the Bay of Persia, off from *Æthiopia*, whose Greatness and Distance is not manifest from the Continent. But *Madagascar* is a vast Distance,

Distance, some Matter of 800 Leagues off from the Bay of Persia. Besides, Pliny says, that this Island could not be come to by Way of the Red Sea, by reason of the excessive Heat among the small Islands : So that it is plain, they coasted round Africk to come at Cerne ; which if it be Ceylon, or Sumatra, as 'twas probably one of them, what a prodigious Voyage was this for the Infancy of Navigation ? For we do little more, in one of our longest East-India Voyages. Upon the Whole therefore it is no Argument, that America was not peopled from the other Parts of the World, because the latter Ages wanted Skill to sail thither, or because History says nothing of it. For all our History comes from the Greeks and Romans ; and they were too ignorant in Navigation, to mention or to credit such a Relation, tho' they might have it from other Nations. And yet that * Account of Aristotle and Diodorus, concerning the Carthaginians going to a vast desert Island, in the Atlantick Ocean with navigable Rivers, wondrously fertile, many Days Sail from the Gades, or Cadiz, can hardly agree to any Thing but America ; for no Island between Cadiz and America, has any Thing like a navigable River. But setting aside all this, and supposing there was never any settled Navigation to America before Columbus ; one or two casual Vessels drove thither by Storm in the earlier Ages of the World, might have well peopled that Continent, before Columbus's Discovery. For if these three Parts of the World could be stocked so full, with the Progeny of but two Persons, in less than four thousand Years ; the other fourth Part might be peopled from as small a Stock, in a shorter Time. Besides, it seems to me a plain Argument, that the Americans are but a later Drain from the Inhabitants of the other Parts of the World, because America is thinner peopled than the rest ; to mention nothing of the Tradition they have in common with other Nations of a Deluge, which is a very clear Proof of their Descent from Noah.

* Diod Sic. Lib. 5. Arist. de Reb. Mir.

3. Nor do I see any Reason, why you reckon it impossible for a Black to be produced from a White; perhaps the usual saying, *Lavare Aethiopem*; and that of the Prophet, *Can the Aethiopian change his Skin?* has made you hale in this for an Impossibility too. I own with you, it is a natural Impossibility for a *Bull* to beget a *Boar*, or a *Lion* a *Wolf*; for though, by unnatural Commixtures, we may produce several hybridous Kinds for one Generation, yet after that Nature recoils upon her self and starts back, she never lets them fructify again, and go on with the monstrous Breed; which is the Reason Mules are always barren. But Blacks and Whites breed as genuinely, as either of these with themselves; nay, the Colour of each will be absorbed and lost in a Generation or two. The Posterity of a white Woman, in *Aethiopia*, will in a Generation or two be all *Negro*; and the great Grand-children of a black Man and a white Woman with us, will hardly be distinguished from other *Europeans*. So that from hence it does appear, that Blacks may beget Whites, and Whites Blacks. But then this, you will say, supposes a Commixture of both Sorts; but how could it come to pass, that, when all the World was Whites, any such Thing as a Black could come into the World? Why, if I may philosophise in this Matter, and call in second Causes, I think there is some Reason for it. You know, *Philologus*, the Complexion of Mankind does strangely diversify according to the Nature of the *Climate*; the Hair and Skin of the Inhabitants of the diverse Parts of the World alter, as they are farther or nearer from the Sun; the *Danes* and *Swedes*, *English* and *Scotch*, being much Northern, have generally a brown, white, or yellowish Hair, and somewhat lank; the *Spaniards*, *Italians*, *Greeks*, *Arabians*, &c. have black Hair somewhat curled, and so proportionably all other more southern Nations; the *Europeans* generally have a clear white Skin, the *Asiaticks* a more tawny one, as being much nigher the Sun. But the *Aethiopians* living in a Country where the Sun is more scorching than in any Place of the World; it is necessary, they should be more black

*How the
Blacks
might de-
scend from
a white
Parentage.*

*This Black-
ness caused
by the Heat
of the Sun.*

black than any Nation. For they live not only directly under the Line, but in the midst of a mighty Continent, where they are refreshed by no cool Breezes from the Sea, where the Air is continually heated by sweeping along over fiery Sands, where the Sun receives a double Force by being reflected from such prodigious Mountains: Now if the Warmth of *Asia* is of Efficacy enough to make the Skin of its Inhabitants tawny, and to curl their Hair; we may easily suppose, the intense Heat of *Aethiopia* is sufficient to make its Inhabitants much blacker in their Complexion; and to crisp their Hair into a sort of Frizze. Therefore we may very well conclude, that the first Colony, which settled in a Country of that extraordinay Heat, received a very great Change in their Skins proportionably to the Heat of their Country, and became mighty tawny, much beyond the *Arabians*, and inclinable to Blackness, as the Sun was more intense upon them. Hence, in a Generation or two, that high Degree of Tawniness became the Nature, and from thence the Pride of the Inhabitants; the Men began to value themselves chiefly upon this Complexion, and the Women to affect them the better for it; from thence by the Love to the Male so complexioned, the daily Conversation with him, and the Affectation of his Hiew, there was caused a considerable Influence upon the *Fœtus*, which the Females were pregnant with; so that, upon this Account the Children in *Aethiopia* became more and more black, according to the Fancy of the Mother. Thus we find *Jacob* multiplied the spotted Kind in *Laban's* Herd; and thus *Heliodorus* in his *Aethiopicks*, makes his fair *Chariclea* to be born of Blackamore Parents, only by her Mother's contemplating the Picture of *Andromede*, in her Bed-Chamber. The Children thus produced must be supposed to come nigher and nigher to an absolute Blackness; but when the tender Bodies of such Children were exposed to the scorching Heat of the *African* Sun, and naked too, as is the Custom of the Country, their thin Skins must needs be more than ordinarily burnt by so great a Heat, and be made more black than their Parents.

Parents. And so by these Degrees they might very well come to be such perfect Negroes as we find them. Thus far we may philosophise upon the Point, by pure natural Reason. But the Holy Scripture gives us a farther Light into this Matter. This Curse which God laid upon *Cham* and his Posterity is manifest from Gen. ix. 25. *Cursed be Canaan, a Servant of Servants shall he be unto his Brethren.* Whence there is no Reason to think with many Interpreters, that God designed by this Curse only to punish one Branch of *Cham's* Family, namely *Chanaan*, the Progenitor of that Country, which bore his Name ; but 'tis most probable, that *Canaan* was but another Name of *Ham*, which was common in Antiquity, as, *Gideon* was called *Jerubbaal*; *Daniel*, *Belteshazzar*; *Ascanius*, *Iulus*, &c. and there is a good Reason to be assign'd why *Moses* should call him here by the Name of *Chanaan*, and not *Cham*, namely to keep the *Israelites* in Heart against the *Canaanites*, when they saw, he, from whom their Country receiv'd its Origin and Name, was so especially accursed. But there is the same Reason to believe, that the other Sons of *Cham* shared his Misfortunes as well as *Chanaan*, and other Branches of his Posterity underwent Part of his Curse, of which were chiefly the *Aethiopians*, which were doubtless the Progeny of that undutiful Son. So that the unnatural *Blackness* was probably the Curse upon *Cham's* Posterity, as the leprous *Whiteness* was upon *Gehazi's*. That this Colour was a great Curse upon these Countries, and the Ground of a very great Aversion, is manifest from the common Experience of Mankind, and the Remarks of all Ages. For the Prophet, when he would describe how hated the *Jews* had become to God by their Sins, expresses it thus; *Are ye not as Children of the Aethiopians unto me, O Children of Israel?* Amos ix. 7. So were other Nations used to express any Thing hateful and evil by Blackness.

By the Curse of Cham.

— *Niger est, hunc, tu Romane, caveto.*

Hor. Ser. Sat. 4.

Now as it is unreasonable to think, that God Almighty should create a Race of Men, without any previous Demerit, to be the Scorn and Aversion of their Fellow-Creatures ; so it is highly rational to believe, that this People are the unhappy Race of that accursed *Cham*. For unless we assert this, there is no tolerable Reason to be given, of the Names of those Places, and that famous Deity, which was anciently worshiped in *Africa*. There was the City *Ammonis* upon the Banks of the *African River Cynphus*, in the Island *Meroe*, the Temple of *Hammon*. In *Marmarica* the City * *Ammonia*, otherways named *Paretonium*. There was the *Ammoniaca Regio*, so famous throughout all the World, for the Temple of *Jupiter Hammon*. And † *Stephanus* quotes the Authority of *Alexander Polyhistor*, that all *Africk* was called *Ammonia* from *Hammon* their chief Deity. Now it being thought by most learned Men, that the three Sons of *Noah* were the three famous Deities of the Heathens, and more particularly, that *Ham* was *Jupiter* ; it is not improbable that *Africk* was the original Seat of *Ham*, by reason that he is chiefly worshiped there, and so many Places are called in honour of his Name ; nor is it any Objection against this, that *Africk* is so remote from the first settling of *Noah*; because in all probability *Ham*, after the Curse, being out of Favour with his Father and Brethren, would remove as far out of the Way as he could.

Phil. This Discourse of yours, concerning the Origin of these Nations, is fine plausible Talk ; but I can never be brought to believe, that the *Americans* (especially) are descended from any other Part of the World ; because their Language and Customs are so perfectly different from any Thing we observe among the rest. The Customs of the *Europeans* and *Asiaticks* are pretty conformable ; the modern northern Languages are very nigh the same, and so are the *Spanish*, *Italian*, and *French* : And as for the ancient eastern Tongues, they seem to be but different Dia-

* Plin. Lib. 6. Cap. 29.

† Steph. de Urb. Verb. *Ammonia*.

lects (as the Learned that Way say) of the Hebrew or Chaldee. But, as for the *Americans*, they do *toto cœlo distare*, in all their Customs from us ; and if you look upon an *American Vocabulary*, as you may see several of them in *De Laet's History of America*, you can hardly pick out one Word that sounds any Thing like those, in any other Language ancient or modern. *Grotius*, with all his Wit, was not able to pick out above three or four, neither of which will hold Water ; which * *De Laet* taking Advantage of, has horribly exposed that learned Man for. So that, if the *Americans* had descended from any of these Parts of the World, they would most undoubtedly have retained some of their Customs and Words, and not have stood at so vast a Distance from us, in every Thing, as we find they do.

Cred. It is no Argument that the *Americans* were not derived from the *Europeans*, or other Inhabitants of the World, because their Language does not so well agree with ours. For Languages alter mightily in Time, even where they maintain a Correspondence with those People of the first original Tongue ; but must needs vary vastly more in the *Americans*, who were perfectly cut off from all such Conversation. And besides, it is not true, that all Languages, besides the *American* ones, seem to be derived from some other, and have a nigh Resemblance to one another ; for as far as ever I was able to remark, *Irish* and *Welſh*, and several of the Languages of the *East-Indies*, are as different from the learned, or the other *European* Languages, as the *American* Tongues are. So that, by this Argument, the *Britains* and *Irish*, and most of the Eastern Nations, must be *Aborigines* too, as well as the *Americans*.

And as for the Customs of the *Americans*, they are not so very different as you would pretend ; nay, they retain in many Things such an Uniformity of Practice with us, as affords an indubitable Proof, that they are of the same Original. I will not instance in such Actions, which are

* *De Laet de Orig. Amer.*

natural and common to all Men, such as are the Result of human Passions, or are so easy of Invention, as they can hardly be avoided, as Singing, Dancing, Bowing, Leaping, &c. but in such Actions as are owing to some one lucky Invention, or transcribed from others by Imitation; which they cannot all be supposed to have lighted upon themselves, but must have them communicated to them by others. It would be no Argument to prove this Original, because I did see an *American* capering an odd Kind of Jigg; but if I should see two *Americans* playing a Game at Tennis or Baggamon, or writing an *Italian* Hand, I should be confident, they learned this from some *European*. And many Customs of this Sort we find among them, learned from other Parts of the World, which are an unanswerable Argument for their Descent from them.

To begin first with some of their *religious Rites*, and particularly *Sacrifice*. Tho' it should be granted, that natural Religion was common to all Men; yet what Reason can be assigned, that the *Americans*, who are by you supposed to have no Communication with the rest of the World, should worship God with just such positive Rites, as the far greatest Part of the World did? There are several Ways of worshiping God, which they might have took, and a thousand religious Rites they might have made use of; but why they should just jump upon *Sacrifice* with the rest of the World, is unaccountable. But granting Sacrifice as an easy Deduction from natural Reason, as it is not, and that all Men must think it reasonable, that their Sins must be expiated by the Blood of Beasts, which was a Sort of vicarious Life taken away, in lieu of their own which was forfeited. How came they to be acquainted with this *Adamical Punishment*, and to know that the Wages of Sin was Death? This must be all grounded upon Scripture or ancient Tradition, which the Heathens all over the World stuck fast to, tho' they could give no Reason for it; and which the *Americans* could never have come to the Knowledge of, unles they had been derived from other Nations, and had had the same

with a T H E I S T.

same universal Original. But tho' this vicarious Puniment of Beasts should be allowed to be natural, how should they come to perform it just the same Way, as the other Parts of the World did, which they had no converse with? One would have thought, that in this Case Strangling or Jugulation, should be the most natural and proper Way of dispatching the vicarious Victim, and appeasing the Deity, and the Sacrifice should terminate here: But what Reason can be given, why they, with the rest of the World, should burn the Flesh of the Victim, and that they should think, that God was to be reconciled by the Smell of broiled Meat? There is no Manner of rational Account to be given for this; and they might as well have raised a Smoak to the Deity by wet Straw, or Water and Lime, or any other Way, had they been left free to their own Invention. 'Tis plain, therefore, that they received this Manner of Sacrificing from the other Parts of the World, who had it by Tradition delivered down to them from the first Parents.

Besides this, there are several other Rites and arbitrary Ways of Worship, which they must be supposed to have received from the *Europeans* or *Asiaticks*. The Children of *Mexico*, and *Jucatan*, are circumcised. And the *Mexican* Priests, like the Vestals, keep a constant and unextinguished Fire. They celebrate a Jubilee every fiftieth Year like the *Jews*, and as some write, a Sabbath every seventh Day. They lance their Bodies, and let out their Blood, like the Priests of *Baal*, to shew the Earnestness of their Devotion. The *Carribbeans* observe the New-Moons, as the *Jews* did, with the Sound of Trumpets and great Shouts. The *Peruvians* observe a Kind of a Mock-Passover, by colouring the Threshold of their Houses with a Kind of Pulse mixed with Blood. I omit the Relations which some *Spanish* Authors have made, concerning the Use of Baptism amongst some of them, and Signations with the Cross, because some have questioned these Authorities; but these other Relations are indubitable, and agreed to by all, as may be seen in the Histories of *Josephus*, *Acosta*, *Herrera*, *Garcilassus de Vega*, *Johannes*

de Laet and *Purchas*. Now it cannot be supposed, that these *Americans* should hold such a wondrous Uniformity with other Nations, with whom they never had any Converse, but had a perfect different Original.

And so again, at the Time of the *Spaniard's* Discovery of these People, they found them exercising Abundance of Arts and Inventions, which owed their Original to the *Europeans* or *Asiaticks*, which they could never have come to the Knowledge of, unless by a Commerce with them, or a Descent from them. And if we were to instance in no other, the Art of Numbering so exactly conformable to ours, were a sufficient Argument of their Descent from us. Now, why should the *Americans*, if they had not learned numbring from us, reckon by *Tens*? Why should *Ten* still be their climacterical, or gradual Number, and why should they make their ascent by *Tens* to the highest Number, as by so many Steps? Why might they not as well have made either 8, or 9, or 15, the terminative Number, and given Names to the doubling, or trebling of these, instead of thirty, forty, &c? Why might they not have taken up with the *Gothick* Way of reckoning by Dozens, or a thousand other Ways, they might have made Use of, besides Decimals? Now, because we find the *Americans* reckon just our Way, have invented Names only for the decimal Numbers, viz. 10, 20, 100, 1000, (with the nine small Numbers or Units,) and whereas there were many other Ways of reckoning besides, some of which would be more convenient, as being more capable of Division, viz. 8, 12, &c. that they have made Use only of our Way by Decimals; it can never be supposed, but they must have learned their Art of Numbring from us. And so likewise their Fighting with Bows and Arrows, their Arts of Spinning, Weaving, &c. do most strongly confirm their Origin from our Parts. The Invention of Bows and Arrows seems altogether as fortuitous, and as odd, as that of Guns; and a Man that was ignorant of both the Arts, would take a Bullet to be a better offensive Weapon than an Arrow. How should they

they come to feather and barb their Arrows, and wear their Quivers upon their Shoulders, just like the ancient *Europeans*, had they not learned it from them? So that I conclude, the *Americans* could no more have had the Art of Archery, unless from this Part of the World, than they could have that of Gunnery. The like may be said of Spinning and Weaving, which are wonderful Inventions, which Mankind might have been without for many thousands of Years, unless they had been beholden to some lucky Hit for the Invention of them. Now we cannot suppose, that the same lucky Hits should happen, in so different Parts of the World, that had no Communication with each other, and that they should improve these Hints, by the very same artificial Methods; and therefore we must conclude, that those first Colonies, which planted *America*, learned those Arts among us here.

And now, lastly, *Philologus*, by this Observation we may learn, how very anciently *America* was peopled; it may be a very short Time after the Flood. For the *Americans* have only, among them, those Arts, which were of the earliest Invention, as those which we have before mentioned; but as for *Writing*, which was later, they are perfectly ignorant of it. So that, in all Probability, *America* was peopled, before the Invention of Writing; for they cannot be supposed to have lost so useful an Art, or that all, who came thither, were perfect Strangers to it. Writing, I suppose, was invented about *Abraham's* Time, so that the first Colonies into *America* must precede that; which was in so very early an Age of the World, that a small Number of Persons would be Stock sufficient for it.

Phil. Some Things in this Argument indeed look pretty probable, but there are two Things in your Supposition, which I cannot digest; for you suppose that these first Colonies came over thither by Chance in Boats, which is the most common Opinion, and which I find you are most inclined to; but then say I in the first place, how got the Women over? I can well enough fancy a Boat's Crew of Tarpawlings blown over thither, but that

would be *Florus's Res unius etatis, Populus Virorum*; they would have dropped off by Degrees, and left no Breed behind them. So that you must have Recourse to some Female Navigators to make good your Opinion, which, being a Thing so very unusual, makes it altogether incredible. And then again in the second Place, I cannot imagine, how *America* should be stocked with Beasts and other Animals, having no Communication with the rest of the World. I suppose, you will not make *Foxes*, and *Lions*, and *Dogs*, and *Hares*, and the rest of the Quadrupeds, turn Navigators too, and send out their Colonies from these Parts of the World. Or if you say the first Planters of *America* brought them over with them, this might pass well enough with us, as to the useful Animals, and those proper for Food; but Lions and Bears, methinks, should be the last Thing Men should carry on Shipboard with them; for truly they do not seem to be such good-natured Creatures, that Men should be so in Love with them, as to endeavour to increase their Breed. How should Men ever come to carry over such noxious Creatures, as Lions and Tigres, and yet omit such useful ones as Horses and Sheep? Nay, how should several whole Species of Animals, all run into *America*; for there are several Sorts of Creatures there, which are to be found in no Part of the World besides. Pray get over this, *Credentius*, and then we may possibly allow *America* to be peopled from this Part of the World.

Cred. When there are demonstrative Arguments for any Thing, it is not every Difficulty should make us disbelieve it; for we see every Day Things come to pass, which we cannot assign a Reason for. Though we should not be able to give an Account, how Women and Quadrupeds were transplanted there; yet the Certainty we have of their Descent from these Parts of the World, by the Arts and Customs they enjoy in common with us, are sufficient Motives to incline us to believe, that its first Inhabitants came from these Parts. But, however, these Difficulties which you have started, are not so unanswerable as you would pretend. For

as for the Strangeness of carrying Women on Ship-board, I think that may be easily accounted for, if we allow that the Ancients made any Voyages to *America*, as some pretend ; for then the *Phœnicians*, or others, might carry over Women thither, as well as we do now-a-days to our Plantations there. Or if we assert that Chance brought the first Inhabitants thither, as it did *Alphonso Sanctio*, who first informed *Columbus* of *America*; there might be probably Women on Board such a Vessel ; for in those early Ages of the World, the Women were more masculine and robust, and less bred up to Delicateness ; they frequently attended their Husbands in war-like Expeditions, and in other Actions of Difficulty and Danger. Nay, 'tis usual still among the * *Americans*, to have their Wives follow them into the Camp, and to carry their Provisions for them. So that it is nothing improbable, to think, that the first Vessel which came to *America*, had in it Persons of both Sexes. But the greatest Difficulty is about the Transportation of the Animals ; especially those of the wild Kind, and such as are not to be found in these Parts. As for Lions and Bears, I do not think they were brought over in Ships ; they probably got thither by the way of *Greenland*, where the Passage is but narrow ; and 'tis incredible to think, how far such Creatures will swim ; for Travellers tell us, they have seen Bears, &c. swim nine or ten Leagues together. As for the Fowls, Observations of Navigators tell, what vast Tracts of Sea they can fly over, by their discovering them over their Heads, in the midst of the Ocean ; which is done without any Difficulty, and with prodigious Swiftnes, by those Birds, that fly so high, as to get out of the vehement Attraction of the Earth, and can push on without the Renitency of the grosser Atmosphere. Others of their Animals are amphibious, such as the *Morsh*, a great Sort of deformed Sea-calf, and the *Tatu* or † *Armadillo*, a scaly Animal about the Bigness of a Pig ; as also many others of the serpentine Kind,

* Ant. Knivet. Relat. † Vid. Laet. Hist. Amer. Lib. 15. Cap. 6.

the *Boytioqua*, *Giboya*, *Ibiboboca*, &c. And these, without Doubt, might easily enough have been preserved in the Waters of the Flood. The greatest Difficulty is about such terrestrial Animals, as are to be found in no other Part of the World besides; how they should escape being destroyed in the Deluge; or if they were destroyed, how the Breed came to be restored, when this Part of the World had no Animals like them. To obviate this Objection, some have asserted *Noah's* Deluge to be only topical, and as far as the World was inhabited; but those Beds of Shells, petrified Bones of Fish, &c. found in *America*, are undeniable Arguments of the Universality of it. Therefore, one of these two Things must be asserted, either that God Almighty, after the *Noaical* Deluge, created a-new the Creatures in *America*; or else that he preserved them in an extraordinary Manner, as he did those in this Part of the World in *Noah's* Ark. And if I were left to my self, I should think this latter was the Way which God took; and this fairly answers all the Difficulties which arise upon any other Supposition, and seems agreeable to the divine Practice in other Matters.

But, however, if we cannot be so fanciful as to believe this; yet it is not incredible to think, how variously Creatures may be altered by being transplanted to different Climates, and by Commixtures of the same or analogous Species: Of which the innumerable Kinds of Dogs are a remarkable Instance. And how great a Difference the Alteration of the Climate will create, may be judged, from the Opinion of those who assert, that the same *Crocodile* of *Ægypt* is the *Lizzard* in *Italy*, and the *Eff* in our Country.

Phil. There is, I confess, *Credentius*, something of Probability in this; but can you say as much for the Formation of *Eve* out of her Husband's Side? I have nothing to say to the Creation of Animals; for I do not observe any Absurdity in *Moses's* Account of them. But methinks, this making of Womankind out of a Rib, out-

Cadmus. I protest, this is the oddest Piece of Matter to make a Woman of, which could be thought on. But to let this pass : Had *Adam* more Ribs than other People or no ? If you say no, then to be sure he wanted a Rib of one Side or other ; then we had a maimed Progenitor, a very sad Sample for the archetypal Man. If you say, he had a Rib to spare, this would have made a Monster of the glorious *Adam*; for it would have been as prodigious, as three Hands, or four Eyes. But though I could swallow all this, yet I can never beat it into my Head, how a Woman's Body could be made of a little Rib, which does not equal the hundredth, or perhaps the thousandth Part of it. To say that Bulk was supplied by borrowed Matter, will not much avail ; for then *Eve* had more truly been said to have been made out of that larger Portion of borrowed Matter, whatever it was, than out of the Rib. Come, *Credentius*, set your Shoulders to this Difficulty.

Cred. Indeed, Sir, I think, I need hardly set my Finger to it. For we need not so much as grant you, that the original Word, which we translate *Rib*, does signify so there; for it generally signifies a *Side*, and the Septuagint translate it in this place by the Greek Word πλευρα, which signifies so, and so in most other Places ; but never render it by any Word which denotes a Rib. So that, if this Oddness of the Rib sticks so much with you, you may render it *Side* ; so that God formed the Woman out of one of the Sides of *Adam*, or of both the Sides, which the Original may imply. That is, God took some Part of the Substance of *Adam's* Body about his Side, he closed up the Orifice again, and out of this Substance he formed *Eve*. Or if the meaning be, that he took the Rib with the Flesh, I do not see how that mars the Matter : For if it was the Will of God, to form the Woman out of Man ; for my Part I do not see, how in all the whole Body he could take it from a more proper place. If God designed any mystical Meaning by it, it is the properest. To have formed her, like *Minerva* of the Poets, out of the Head, would have entitled

tituled her to a Superiority, which God did not intend ; to have made her from any inferiour, or more dishonourable Part, would not have agreed with their Equality and Partnership which she was allotted for. I doubt not, but if Mankind should propagate, as the *Religio Medici* would have them, like Trees, and if *Moses* had related the Production of the first Woman in the ordinary way of Generation now ; you Theistical Wits would have exposed it, as being altogether as ridiculous as the Rib : For that Oddness, which you laugh at, is only the Unusualness of it, which if it were more common, would look natural enough. So again, for my Part, I do not see, how that if *Adam* had wanted a Rib after this Formation, he would have been such a maimed Creature as you would make him, for why might not God have supplied him with another, having taken this from him ? Neither can I apprehend him to have been such a three-handed Monster, although he should have had this Rib superfluous in him. For, to use *Thomas Aquinas's* Comparison, this Rib was like the Seed of Animals and Vegetables, superfluous for the Perfection of the *Individuum*, but necessary for the Generation of the Off-spring. The Rib was superfluous to *Adam*, as a private Person ; but necessary, as the Origin from which the Woman, and all Mankind, was to be produced. As for the Absurdity you would infer, from the Smallness of the Quantity of Matter in a Rib, to make a Woman of ; if you will be pleased to think but of an Acorn, or a Mustard-seed, you will never use that Argument more.

Phil. But supposing, *Credentius*, we grant you all you require, as to the supernatural Formation of this Couple ; yet methinks it does not appear from your *Mosaical History*, that these two were the primogenial Parents of the whole World. I am rather apt to think they were but only the first of the Holy Race forsooth, the original Parents of the *Jews*, who could not deign to proceed from that Stock which the common Herd of Mankind came from ; and therefore they must have an Origin more immediately from the Deity, to imprint a more peculiar

Character of Dignity and Holiness upon them. Just like some of the ancient Heroes, and other vain Fellows, that would pretend to be Bastards to some God, or other, that they may ride top-gallant upon the Necks of other People. And for my Part *, I cannot see, that the Jewish Legislator had any other Design in this Relation ; for he intimates, that there were more Men in the World than the two that were thus miraculously created. For he perfectly relates two Creations of Mankind, one of the common Race of Men within the six Days, Gen. i. 27. and another of the sacred Race of the Jews, Gen. ii. 9. Before God created *Eve*, he said there was not a *meet Help for him*, that is none of the wicked Ante-adamical Race, were fit Wives for that holy Man. When *Moses* said *Cain* was a Tiller of the Ground, he must needs suppose, there were at that Time all the Artificers which have Relation to Tillage, not only *Smiths* and *Carpenters*, but *Millers* and *Bakers*. So when *Cain* murthers his Brother *Abel*, he entices him into the *Field*, for Fear any Body should see him ; which supposes, that they dwelt in some Town where there were too many Eyes to watch him, where note, the word *Field* does plainly answer to *Town* or *City*. When *Cain* says, *Every one that findeth me shall slay me*, he supposes a great Number of Men in the World : And when God set a Mark upon this Parricide, for fear any one should slay him, it supposes there were many Men in the World which might accidentally do it. Besides, *Moses* says, *Cain* went into the Land of *Nod*, and married a Wife, and builded a City, where it must be thought, there were Women for him to marry, and Men to inhabit his City. But *Josephus* is more plain, for he says he struck in with a Pack of rascally Robbers, and became their Head. Now it is plain from all this, that *Moses* would not have it presumed, that he wrote here of the primitive Parents of all the World ; seeing that within a few Lines he lets fall so many Expressions which denote the contrary. He designed only to give an Ac-

* Præadamitæ. Lib. 3. Cap. 4. O. R.

count of the Origin of the *Jews*, as other Legislators have given out of other Countries; but the later *Jews*, out of Partiality to their Country, mistook his Meaning, as if he had delivered the History of the universal Creation; and they have led the Christians by the Nose ever since.

Cred. Well, I see there is nothing so plain and literal, but Men of a paradoxical Humour will strain to an odd Meaning. One would think, the *Mosaical Writings* were so plain in making *Adam* and *Eve* the first of Mankind, that no one could either mistake or pervert their Meaning till the contrary was maintained from them by the Author of the *Praadamite*, or *Men before Adam*. And yet all that that Author could do with the Assistance of a great deal of Wit, and a considerable Degree of Learning, was only to put some odd Glosses upon a few Texts of Scripture, to make them look to his Purpose; which tho' they may seem a little surprising as he has dressed them out, make nothing at all for him, when seriously attended to; nay, he is so far from proving *Praadamites* from *Moses*, that not only the express Assertion of that holy Writer, but the whole Tenour of his Book contradicts it. It is needless to cast about for Arguments and Passages of Scripture to confute such a wild Paradox; for that one Passage, *Gen. iii. 20.* must for ever overthrow it. *And Adam called his Wife's Name Eve, because she was the Mother of all Living.* Now if this be Scripture, the Hypothesis of the *Praadamites*, as grounded upon Scripture, is necessarily false, unless the Scripture can be at the same Time false and true. So that I strangely wonder at the ingenious Author of that odd Book, that he should take no Notice of this Text that confutes his whole Hypothesis; for he was a Man of too much Scripture-learning to be ignorant of the place, and one would think, of too much Sense to be guilty of so palpable a Disingenuity. But to speak to the Arguments you have urged out of him. As for the two several Creations which are pretended in the first and second of *Genesis*, there is nothing like it. Not that we need have

No Race of
Men before
Adam.

The Argu-
ments for
the Pra-
damites an-
swered.

have Recourse to * Father Simon's Whim of the Scribe-offices, as if this was (as he pretends) a Repetition, occasioned by the scatter'd or mixed Copies out of these Repositories. But *Moses* having given an Account of the six Days Creation in general; in the second Chapter, he reassumes the Argument, and treats of the Creation of Man in particular. Now to consider the Nobleness of Man, whom God design'd the Lord of the Creation, the more particular Concern we must needs have to be informed of our own Rise, and the great Importance this bears in Order to a holy Life, and a religious Gratitude; I think this is no more, than might well be expected in this Case. But, however, to defer a remarkable Passage in History, and to reassume it to speak more largely of it in another Place, is a Thing common to all Historians. But they that ground a new Creation upon that Reassumption or Repetition, may as well make as many Creations as they find the old one mentioned in the *Psalms*, or *Prophets*, or *New Testament*. As for the next Argument of *Adam*'s not finding a Help meet for him; that does not in the least imply, that there were a Number of other Men and Women in the World; but it only denotes, that there was as yet no Woman in the World. Which is an Expression not unlike that of *Ovid*.

*Sanctius his Animal mentisque capacius alta,
Deerat adhuc —*

Now one might with as good a Colour pretend, that the Poet allowed with the Author of the *Preadamites*, that there was a wicked Generation of Men before, and his Description is the Generation of the *Holy* one. But to be short, methinks this Expression, considering the Circumstances, is very apposite in the ordinary Sense. *Adam* had just before all the Animals, Male and Female, brought before him, to name them; now he might very well think it strange, that he of all the Creation should be the

* Simon. Crit. Hist. V. T. Lib. 1. Cap. 8.

single Species, and so might the Reader of this Relation, as well as he; and therefore Moses subjoins, *But for Adam there was not found an Help meet for him*; for God had deferred the Creation of the Woman, till some Time afterwards. And I don't see, how any other tolerable Sense can be put upon the Words. As for your next Objecti-
on of *Cain's* being a Tiller of the Ground, which re-
quires the Assittance of many other precedent Arts; this
is easily to be answered, by saying, that this Art of Til-
lage was not in its full Perfection in *Cain's* Time, that he
might be a Tiller of the Ground without all those Instru-
ments we use for our Convenience now; he might make
use of wooden Ploughs or Spades; and form his Tools
with sharp Flints or Shells, instead of Knives and Hat-
chets, which were the first Instruments of cutting *, and
were retained in religious Uses in latter Times, as in Cir-
cumcision, *Exod.* iv. 25. *Jos.* v. 3. *Herod. Lib.* 2.
and in Castration of the *Cybeline* Priests, *Plin. Lib.* 35.
Juv. Stat. 6. So when *Cain* is said to have slain his Bro-
ther in the Field; the word Field is not opposed to *City*,
but to the Place of Abode, the House or Tent where
they dwelt. And again, as for *Cain's* saying, *Every one*
that findeth me, shall slay me; God's setting a Mark upon
him, his marrying a Wife and building a *City* in the
Land of *Nod*; it does by no Means suppose a former Ge-
neration of *Praeadamites*. For the word *Nod* does not ne-
cessarily signify a Country, but it may signify a *Fugitive*;
so that the Sense may be, *he lived a Fugitive, or Vagabond*
in the Land. Neither, if we should grant, there were
a considerable Number of Men in the World at that
Time, would it make for this *Praeadamical* Hypothesis;
for they might all be descended from *Adam*. For this
Murther of *Abel* happened, in all Probability, in the 129th
Year of *Adam*. For the Scripture says expressly, that
Seth was born in the 130th Year, *Gen. v. 3.* and *Seth*
was given in the Lieu of *Abel*. For *Eve* says, *Gen. iv.*
25. *God has appointed me another Seed instead of Abel,*

* *Devolvit ipse acuto sibi pondera silice.* Catul. de At.

whom Cain slew. Therefore it is most probable, that he was born the Year after the Murther, to be a Comfort to the first Parents after so sad an Affliction, having never seen the Death of any of their Off-spring before. So that then *Cain* must be 129 Years old, when he took his Flight, at least. Now 'tis no Wonder that then there should be a considerable Number of Inhabitants in the World; for it is not likely that *Adam* and *Eve* had no Children all that Time; it is probable they had a great many, and that there was a competent Stock of Mankind by this Time, to the Number it may be of an hundred thousand, considering the primitive Fecundity. For if the Children of *Israel* from 70 Souls in the Space of 210 Years became 600,000 fighting Men, whereas a great Number of them died during the Increase, we may well enough suppose that the Children of *Adam* might amount to 100,000 in 130 Years, which is almost five Generations. So that *Cain* might very well build a City, or grow out of the Knowledge of many, when there were such a Number of People in the World.

A	M	30	10.
		60	100.
		90	1000.
		120	10,000.
		130	100,000.
			111,110.
	Subtract		1.
			111,109.

Phil. Another Thing*, which makes my Faith strain a little, is the making *Adam* give Names to all the Animals in the World in one Bit of a Day, and this upon mature Consideration of their Nature and Faculties, and playing the Philosopher upon each of them, as the Divines will have it. And indeed he must be a very expedite Philosopher, and they must be very nimble Creatures, to come and go in that little Time of this Day allotted by *Moses*, for this Purpose. For a small Pittance of Time must serve for this, when the Day was taken up with so many other Matters. This, believe me, is the busiest Day of all the rest; for *Moses* then makes the Deity bestir himself to

* O.R. p. 46, 47. From *Gataker's Cinnus*.

some Purpose, as if he began to grow weary of his creating, and was resolved to have his Work over by the Week's End. For, to set aside this naming of the Animals, which, to consider the Nature of each, and to adapt them a Name to it, would require no small Time; let us see what a hurry there must be, for the Transaction of other Matters. In the first Place, there were so many Thousand of Animals created, then there was a Counsel called for the Creation of Man, who had at first a Body formed out of Clay, and a Soul breathed into it by God; then *Adam* falls asleep, and had a Mistress formed out of one of his Ribs; when he wakes, he performs (as must be supposed) some Ceremonies of Courtship to the new-found Lady, gains her Affections, and celebrates an extemporary Marriage; the Woman leaves her new Husband, and falls a parlying with an ugly Serpent, or the Devil, about an Apple; after a deal of arguing *Pro* and *Con*, the Woman yields to the Beast, eats the Apple, tempts her Husband, makes his Mouth water, and he eats too; then their Nature is altered, they lose their Glory and their Sense, find out one another's blind Side, are ashamed of their Nakedness, commence Tailors *extempore*, few Fig-leaves together and make themselves fine green Aprons. Then God in the Evening comes into the Garden; the guilty Criminals hide themselves in the Thickets; God summons them, they appear, there is a fair Hearing of the Cause, they make their Excuses, and after a full Examination, God decrees to the Man, Woman, and Serpent, the Punishments they had merited. Then they are drove out of Paradise, two Angels with b:andisht Swords are set Centinels at the Garden-door, and poor *Adam* and *Eve* are forced into the Woods, to take up their Lodging among the Beasts. So that here is almost the whole Opera of the *Creation of the World* performed this Day; and there is but a very little Time left, for *Adam*'s making his Vocabulary, and reading his Philosophy-Lectures. I am unwilling to tire you with Absurdities I could raise from all these Particulars, but one Thing I must needs tell you lies cross my Threat mightily,

ly, which I can never swallow ; and that is to consider what a nimble March the grave Elephants must make from *India* to *Eden* ; and what a strange Rendezvouz there must be of *Getulian* Lions and *Greenland* Bears, of *Guinean* Monkeys and *English* Mastiffs, and all to travel so far at so short a Warning, and in so little a Time. Pray, good *Credentius*, help out a poor Unbeliever, in the midst of these Difficulties.

Cred. But supposing, *Philologus*, we should deny all *No confu-*
sed Hud-
in the Re-
lation of
the sixth
Day's Wor-

this which you take for granted, that the Matter of all this Relation was transacted in one Day, and that the Animals took so long a Journey to wait on *Adam* ; then all this fine Harangue falls to nothing. And indeed I do not see any Thing in Scripture to countenance it ; it is only the general Opinion of the Schools, who suppose the Fall of Man to have happened the first Day of his Creation ; and this is grounded upon an Argument, which I see nothing in ; which is, because otherwise *Adam* might have begotten a Child in his Innocency, and then would not have traduced his Guilt to his Posterity. I shall not trouble my self to confute this Argument, because it is only a wild Supposition, and which may be answered by twenty Suppositions as probable on the other Side. My Business I undertook with you is, to vindicate the Authority of the Scripture, and not the Schoolmen's Hypotheses ; and I do not here find any Absurdity in that, whatever your Supposition may bring along with it. For,

1st, Here is not a Word in Scripture of the Lapse happening the sixth Day of the World's Creation, or the first of Man's ; and therefore you ought not to impute any Absurdities to the *Mosaical* Account, which may follow from that Opinion. Indeed those Difficulties, which you have urged out of Mr. *Gataker*, shew, that all these Things could not be transacted in one Day ; but if they were done in many, the Authority of the Scripture remains entire ; and truly the Arguments of that learned Man (which he has brought to confute the Opinion of the Schools, and you have borrowed to expose the *Mosaical* Account) to me seem very conclusive. But besides, I have other

The Laps-
of Man, no
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tion.

Reasons to think, that the Lapſe of Mankind did not happen the first Day; but that there did a conſiderable Time intervene before this unhappy Miſcarriage. I doubt not but that *Adam* before the Fall was endow'd with an extraordinary Degree of Knowledge; for I can never agree with the *Socinians*, that he was ſuch a poor ignorant Idiot as they would make of him. But then I am apt to believe, that this Knowledge inclined more to the Angelical and Intuitive, than to the Experimental and Discursive one. For it proceeded only from the extraordinary Influence of the divine Grace, and not from his own Deductions, Experiments and Discourse. So that tho' *Adam* were ever ſo wife a Creature, I much queſtion whether he had the inspired Power of Speaking, as the Apostles had. For Words are pure placitory Things, and depend upon the mutual Agreement of the Speaker and the Hearer; and therefore 'tis most reaſonable to think, that *Adam* and *Eve* coined their own Words themſelves. The Difference between the Apostles and them was very wide; because the Apostles ſpake to Men who underſtood thoſe Languages; but if *Adam* had ſpoken to *Eve* Hebrew, or Greek, ſhe could have no more underſtood him, than if he had held his Tongue. They, that main-tain this Opinion, muſt have Recourſe to Inspiration upon Inspiration, and Miracle upon Miracle; there muſt be one Inspiration for *Adam* to ſpeak, and another for *Eve* to understand; there muſt be the immediate Assistance of the Holy Ghost for every Word and Syllable, and that too with a double Efficacy, not only for the Infor-mation of the Hearer, but to make the Speaker under-ſtood his own Words. It remains therefore, that the firſt Parents framed a Language for themſelves, which muſt be a conſiderable Time a composing; ſo that whereas we find them readily diſcourſing at the Time of the Lapſe both with God, the Serpent, and themſelves, it muſt follow that not only the Fall, but the naming of the Animals muſt be at ſuch a convenient Distance of Time from the Creation, as might give them Leisure to frame the Lan-guage. Which Time cannot be ſuppoſed to be over-long,

long, because their extraordinary intellectual Capacity, they were then endowed with, would mightily facilitate their Invention of Words, and proper adapting them to Things. And 2dly, We may draw another Reason, that the Lapse did not happen upon the first Day from Gen. iii. 8. from their being acquainted with *the Voice of God walking in the Garden in the cool of the Day*; which implies they were used, and much accustomed to the divine Presence, or *Shechinah*, that they were able to know it so readily, which they could not be supposed to do in one Day. And lastly, The same Verse informs us, that they *hid themselves among the Trees of the Garden*, which shews they were better acquainted with it, than they could be in an Hour or two, so as to find out the darkest Thickets and Umbrages of it.

2. There is another Thing which you take for granted in this Supposition, that is not so very certain; and that is, that in the sixth Day's Creation, there were Animals created all over the World, and placed in those diverse Parts of it, we find them in now. The World might be very well stocked by a Pair or two of each Kind created about *Eden*, and their Breed might increase as Mankind multiplied. And if so (as the Scripture says nothing for it, or against it) *Adam* might name all those Animals with Ease enough, and not trouble them to take such long Journies as you suppose.

3. If we should grant that the Animals were scattered at first all over the Earth, some peculiar to one Country, and some to another; yet it does not follow from the Words of *Moses*, that *Adam* must give Names to all these. It is sufficient, that he named those Animals, that were seated in that Part of the World where *Eden* stood. For it was to all Intents and Purposes sufficient for him to know, what to call those Creatures, which he was to be conversant with, and was to make use of; but it would signify very little, for him to make a Vocabulary of a Number of Animals, that were to reside so many thousand Miles from him, and which he was never like to see again, after his Nomination. So that truly, *Philol-*

gus, I do not see any of these formidable Difficulties you imagine in this Objection; unless we allow all those Suppositions you have a Mind to pin upon the Scripture, without any Warrant from it. And now let us see, if you have any more to say against the *Mosaical* Creation.

Phil. I think, Sir, enough has been said upon this Point; and you have been pleased to afford me better Reasons, for Defence of the *Mosaical* Relations, than ever I have happened to meet withal before.

Cred. I thank you for your Complement. But I will beg leave to add a Word or two more, in Favour of the *Mosaick* Account of the Creation. And that is, that of all the Accounts which in all Nations have been pretended to be given of the Origin of the World, this is the wisest and most philosophical. Which to me is a considerable Proof of its divine Revelation; especially considering at what a low Ebb Letters and Philosophy ran in the *Jewish* Nation: So that I am apt to believe the *Jews* were no more able to invent such a wise and intelligible System of the World, than they were able to make the World it self. And this we may be the better convinced of, if we reflect a little upon the Accounts which other Nations give of it. What a wretched Account was that of the *Egyptians*, and which the *Epicureans* borrowed from them, of Men growing out of the Earth, like Pumpkins and Onions? What strange Stories does the *Gracian* Theology tell of *Oueau* and *Rv*, and *Jupiter* and *Saturn*? What sad Work do their ancient Writers make, when they form Men out of projected Stones, and a Crop of *Dragon's Teeth*? Neither are other Nations more happy, in their pretended Originations of the World. No one can with Patience read the Absurdities in the *Mahometan* Physiology, and Account of the World. They tell us of the first Man's being created, like a *Magpie*, black and white; and this gave the different Colour to Men in the diverse Parts of the World: That God made at first the Throne of God, *Adam*, Paradise, and a great Pen, with which he wrote his Decrees: That this Throne was carried about upon Angels Necks, whose Heads were

*The Ridiculousness
of other
Nations
Account of
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the Mosaical.*

*The Egyp-
tian and
Gracian.*

*The Maho-
metan. 1*

so big, that Birds could not fly in a thousand Years from one Ear to the other : That this great Pen is a Journey of five hundred Years long, and one of eighty Years broad : That the Stars are Firebrands, thrown against the Devils, that would invade Heaven : That the Heaven is propped up by the Mountain *Kaff*, which is made all of Emerald : That the Moon is as big as the Sun, only the Angel *Gabriel* laps his Wing over a Part of it : That the Earth stands upon the Tip of a great *Cow's* Horn, that this *Cow* stands upon a white Stone, and that Stone upon a Mountain, and that Mountain upon God knows what : That it is a Journey of a thousand Years from one Horn of this *Cow* to the other ; with a deal more of this Stuff. Now if you could find such Farce as this is in the *Mosaical* Account, you might very well expose it ; but I am sure you have little Reason to do it, when the whole Tenour of it is so reasonable and judicious.

I should seem too long, and it may be too ludicrous, if I should pick out all the simple Tales, from the Books of Travels into several Parts of the World, of the first Origin of Things. It shall content me only to instance in two great and different Parts of it, and that is in the *Americans*, and the *Chinese*.

The *Americans* (especially the *Harons*) make all Things *The American* proceed from a Spirit called *Cudovangi*, who shot several Arrows into the Ground, which grew to be Men ; that this God begot a very good Son, but had a very wicked Mother, that spoiled all the Good her Son and Grandson did ; with a deal of this miserable Banter. And as for the *Chinese*, that knowing Nation, which you Theists are wont to cry up for the Standard of primitive Learning, and genuine Antiquity, let us see how they mend the Matter in their Account. And they tell us, that one *Tayn*, who lived in Heaven, famous for his Wisdom, disposed the Parts of the World into the Order we find them : That he created out of Nothing the first Man *Panson*, and his Wife *Pansone* : That *Panson*, by a delegated Power from *Tayn*, created another Man called *Tan-*

hom, who was a great Naturalist and Physician, and understanding the Nature of Things, gave Names to them ; and this *Tanhom* had thirteen Brethren so created, and so the World was peopled at first ; then after a while the Sky fell down upon the Earth, and destroyed them ; and then the wife *Tayn* created another Man called *Lotzizam*, who had two Horns, and a Body of an odoriferous Smell ; from him proceeded many Men and Women, who stocked the World with its present Inhabitants ; who when he had left Breed enough, disappeared and went I know not where. Now certainly, when we compare the *Mosaick* History of the Origination of Things with these lame and silly Accounts, we must be so far from exposing, that we must highly admire the Wisdom and Judgment of this excellent Writer ; or rather conclude him to be divinely inspired, who alone of all Legislators and Philosophers, has given us so wise and rational an Account of his Creation.

Of the Fall of Mankind.

Phil. We are now come to another Class of Difficulties, *Credentius*, which seem to arise from *Moses's* Account of the Fall of Man ; and indeed there is nothing here but what looks wild and staring : For I can hardly be serious when I see what a Number of odd Things are here jumbled together. Here is God and the Woman, the Man and the Snake, Trees and Rivers, and Angels and flaming Swords, Here is a Farce of-----

Cred. I am forced to interrupt you, *Philologus*, now you are running upon this Strain ; and I am ashamed at the Disingenuity of the Gentlemen of your Way ; you first dress up the Scripture in a monstrous Shape, and then bait it when you have done. You may make any Thing ridiculous by an odd Management of it, if you please. One may make a Fool's Cap out of an Altar-Cloth, and turn the Words of an Act of Parliament into a Droll : For there is nothing so grave and serious but a witty Man may make ridiculous, by an odd Management of it;

by

by clapping together strange and incoherent Ideas ; by expressing sacred Things in vulgar Terms ; by laughing at that, which other People admire ; by a bold Treatment of those Things which other Men approach with Reverence ; by making Use of Words and Metaphors, which are generally used in a ludicrous Sense. Now these Things being unusual, and consequently surprising, they tickle a Sort of Levity which is in human Nature ; they make most People laugh at them, and Fools to admire them. They are a kind of *Ignes fatui*, collusive Glympses of Wit, which blind People's Understandings at first Sight, make them take that for Wit, which is nothing but Boldness ; and make them admire that for a fine Saying, which is only an unusual one ; for Men, that talk after this Manner, do not speak what other Men cannot say, but what they dare not. Now wise Men presently discern this false Light, and the little Arts which are used in the Management of it, and consequently do not suffer themselves to be deceived by it ; they consider these holy Things as they are, and not as they are wantonly represented : All the Mischief that this Discourse is like to do, is among your little unthinking Things, that set up for *Wit* without common *Sense*, and cry up every Thing for extraordinary Reason, which has nothing in' it; but Clinch and Jingle. I desire, therefore, the Favour of you, Sir, that you would make Use of Argument instead of Raillery, whilst we are disputing of these sacred Truths, that you would propose your Objections with all the Strength you can ; that you would conceal no Difficulty you can espy in this divine Relation ; but I can never endure you should rack and tenter the Passages of it, clap one Part of it incongruously and ridiculously with another, only to make Sport and Banter with it. For I am sure, *Philologus*, you can find nothing ridiculous in the whole Relation, but what you make so. Nor do I reprimand you for the only Man, that are delinquent this Way ; but it is the general Fault of all the Gentlemen of your Persuasion ; who are wont especially to muster up all their Raillery and Malice too, to expose the Relation

of this unfortunate Miscarriage of our first Parents, and to ridicule the Belief of it out of the World. Here I find lies the Master-piece of your Irreligion ; and a Man must not pretend to set up for Theism, without Variety of Blasphemy upon this Subject.

Phil. I perceive, dear *Credentius*, that this is touching you in a tender Place ; and therefore I shall forbear all Reflections, which are not necessary to my Argument. But I must needs tell you, that there are a great many Things in this Relation of the *Fall* which you call *difficult*, and we call *ridiculous* ; but let them be what they will, they are such, that will keep a thinking Man from heartily believing your Religion, till he sees them handsomely cleared up. And the first of these is the Temptation of *Eve* by the Serpent. Now is it not a little odd, *Credentius*, that such an ugly Beast as a Serpent, should venture to accost such a fine Lady, in all her supralapsarian * Beauty ? I pray what Kind of Language did Serpents then speak ? for we find they have no other than that of hissing now. Methinks *Eve* should have run away from such a speaking Beast, faster than from an Apparition, and never have entred into a Conference with it. Why should a Serpent, I pray, of all the Beasts of the Field, have all this Reason and Elocution bestowed upon it ? Methinks a Lion, or a Bull, would have made a good full-mouthed Orator ; but for a pitiful Snake to have such mighty Talents of Rhetorick and Persuasion, is really very surprising. But supposing you say, that the Devil possessing the Organs of this Serpent, tempted the Woman : I answer, I think he made as silly a Choice of a Body, as ever Devil did, to perform this Temptation in. To have seen such an odd Kind of stupid Beast on a sudden turned rational, to hear that speak which was dumb before, would probably have scared the poor Woman out of her Wits : She would quickly, I suppose, have left the Devil and the Apple together, and have betook her self to her Heels, and her Husband to

* *Oracles of Reason*, p. 39, 40, &c.

secure her. Besides, here is not a Word of the Devil's possessing the Body of the Serpent in the Relation of Moses; for he imputes the Woman's being circumvented wholly to the Subtilty of the Serpent; this is only a Shift of your Divines to bring in the Devil, as the Poets used to do the Gods, to help them out at a dead Lift. Come, *Credentius*, what do you say to all this?

Cred. Say! Sir, the best Thing I can say, is to say my Prayers for you to God, to deliver you from this hardned Infidelity. But, in the mean Time, I will answer this terrible Argument of yours, as satisfactorily as I can.

1. Therefore, I assert, that the Tempter which deceived our first Parents, was the Devil, some wicked malicious Spirit that envied the good of Mankind, and those extraordinary Favours, which God had so plentifully bestowed on our first Parents; which inclined him to tempt them to Disobedience, thereby to bring them into the same forlorn Condition with himself, and the other fallen Angels. That the Serpent is only mentioned, whose Body the Devil made use of, is owing to a Metonymy common in the *Hebrew Tongue*, which uses the instrumental for the efficient Cause, and the efficient for the instrumental; of which Multitude of Instances may be given out of the Scripture. Thus the Angels, which God employed about the Destruction of *Sodom* and *Gomorrha*, are called by the Name of the Lord, *Gen. xix.* and what they say and do, is said to be done by the Lord. So on the other Side, the divine Predictions of God Almighty are said to be the Words of the Prophets, which he employed as Instruments to speak them. Thus, *Amos i. 1. The Words of Amos, who was among the Herds-men of Tekoa, &c.* So, *Jer. i. what is called, ver. 2. The Word of the Lord,* is called, *ver. 1. The Words of Jeremiah, the Son of Hilkiah.* So by the Word, by Faith, and by the Sacraments, we are said to be saved; whereas these are only the Instruments God makes use of in our Salvation. So the Ministers of the Gospel are said to bind and to loose; whereas 'tis God only which does

*Not unreasonable
that the Devil should
tempt Mankind in the
Form of a Serpent.*

does it by their Ministry. Therefore it is no Wonder, if by the same Metonymy, what is spoken or done by the Devil, is said to be spoken or done by the Serpent, whose Organs he usurped. But farther it is plain, that it was the Devil which managed this Deceit, not only from the Incongruousness of a brute Beast's over-reaching Mankind in his highest Pitch of Reason, but from the Attestation of the holy Scripture it self. The Author of the Book of *Wisdom*, who well understood the Doctrines and Traditions of the *Jewish Church*, and the Sense of the holy Scripture, tells us expressly, that *by the Envy of the Devil, Death came into the World*, *Wisd. ii. 24.* And our blessed Saviour, who was a better Explainer of the Scriptures, tells us, the *Devil was a Murderer from the beginning*, or the first Creation, alluding to his mischievous Destruction of Mankind ; that he is a *Liar, and the Father of Lies*, both in the first and all the following Temptations of Mankind. Nay, farther than this, the Devil is expressly in Scripture called the Serpent. *And the Dragon was cast out, that old Serpent called the Devil and Satan, Rev. xii. 9. And he laid hold on the Dragon that old Serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, Rev. xx. 2.* All which Places are undoubted References to his first Deception of Mankind, under the Form of a Serpent ; which is evident in the word *Old*, which supposes him to be that first Serpent, which has been deceiving Mankind, ever since their first Original.

*The Devil
much pleased
with
Serpent
Worship.*

2dly. You have no Reason to expose this divine Writer, for his relating the Devil to have taken the Form of a Serpent more than that of any other Creature : For this is but consonant to his other Practice in diverse Places of the World ; for we find him mightily delighted with Serpents, both in his Oracles and his idolatrous Worships. It is known to all, how that the great Oracle of *Delphos* was delivered by the *Pythonissa*, or the Priestess of the Serpent, and *Heinsius* * has observed, that the Greek Πύθων, comes from the Hebrew פָתַח, which signifies a

* Aristarch.

Serpent ; so that the *Pythius Apollo* is nothing else but the Hebrew *Ob* or *Abaddon*, which the *Hellenistical Jews* render Ἀπόλλων, or *Apollo*. * *Aelian* in his various History says, that Serpents among the *Egyptians* τιμῶνται ιχθύες, are zealously worshiped ; and *Maximus Tyrius* † says, that the Serpent was the great Symbol of the Deity to most Nations, and as such was worshiped by the *Indians*. And *Grotius* out of ancient Authors has made appear, that in the old Greek Mysteries, they used to carry about a Serpent, and cry Ἐῦα ; which seems to be a perfect Triumph of the Devil, exulting, as it were, over the unhappy Deception of our first Mother. *Sigismundus* in his History of *Moscovia* relates, that the *Samogithae* there worship a Serpent, which they keep by them ; and tells a Story of a poor Man that was horribly abused by the Devil, for relinquishing the Worship of his Serpent. The like *Guaginus* in his *Sarmatia Europea* tells of the *Lithuanians* ; as also *Scaliger* in his Exercitations, and that they sacrifice to them Milk and Cocks. The like Serpent-worship the same *Scaliger* relates of the People of *Calecut* in the *Indies*, in his Notes upon *Aristotle's Book of Animals*. And *Philip Melanthon* tells a strange Story of some Priests somewhere in *Asia*, that carry about a Serpent in a brazen Vessel, which they attend with a great deal of Musick and Charms in Verse ; the Serpent lifts up himself, and opens his Mouth, and thrusts out the Head of a beautiful Virgin ; the Devil thereby glorying in this Miscarriage, among those poor Idolaters. And some Books of Travels into the *West-Indies*, give the like Account there. Now since the Devil has made use of these viperous Animals in his Service in so many Parts of the World ; why should Men find Fault with *Moses's History*, for asserting a Thing, so agreeable to the Experience of all Mankind ?

3dly, Neither is it necessary to assert, that the Serpent was of the common creeping serpentine Kind. It is most probable something like that flying fiery Sort, which are

This Serpent not the common viperous Kind.

* Lib. 17. Cap. 5.

† Discr. 38.

bred in *Arabia* and *Egypt*, that are of a shining yellowish Colour, like that of Brass; which by the Motion of their Wings, and the Vibration of their Tails, reverberating the Sun-Beams, do afford a most glorious Appearance. Now if the Serpent, whose Body the Devil abus'd, was of this Sort, tho' perhaps it was a Species far more glorious, it was a very proper Creature for him to make use of for this Design. For these Serpents were
* Deut.viii. 15. called * *Saraphs*, or *Seraphim*; which gave the Name to those bright lofty Angels, which were frequently in ancient Times employ'd by God Almighty, to deliver his Will to Mankind; which were wont to take a splendid Form upon them, something like those shining *Seraphs*. Now the Devil, who is us'd to imitate the divine Actions by an artificial Mimicry, observing, that good Angels did minister to *Adam* and *Eve* in this bright Appearance, he usurps the Organs of one of these shining *Serpents*, which he rendred so artificially glorious, as to represent to *Eve* the usual *Schechinah*, or angelical Appearance she was accustomed to; and by this Means, renders himself more successful in his accursed Project. Now unless the Angels did appear in such a Kind of Form, which we suppose here the Devil to imitate, there can be no Account given of the *Seraphim* and *Cherubim*, which were the only *symbolical Imagery* allow'd of in the *Jewiſh Church*; and which seem to be nothing else, but the Representation of those diverse Appearances of Angels, some in the Form of *Cherubim*, beautiful flying Oxen; others in the Shape of *Seraphim*, winged and shining Serpents. Now when the Devil had taken this angelical Representation upon him, it was no Wonder that he did more easily deceive our first unhappy Mother, who might then probably take him to be some good Angel come from Heaven to assist her, as she might often have experienc'd before, during their Stay in Paradise. And if this be so, which I take to be the most probable Account of it; then all that Banter, which your Gentlemen make use of, about the speaking Snake, and the Fright of the Woman, will fall to the Ground; and this Relation of *Moses* will be

be built, not only upon a firm, but a very rational Bottom. But if you have a Mind to be satisfied more in this Matter, I refer you to Archbishop Tonison's learned Treatise of Idolatry, Cap. 14.

Phil. But granting all this to be true, that the Devil appeared to *Eve* in the Shape of an Angel of Light, or, as you will have it, like one of the flying lucid Seraphs, O.R. p.41. and thus deceived *Eve*; yet methinks it would have been but just, that some good Angels should have succoured a poor, ignorant, weak Woman; surely those just Guardians of human Affairs would not have permitted so unequal a Conflict. Certainly, a Person, who had so great a Price set upon her Head, as the Salvation of all Mankind, might well have deserv'd a Guard of Angels. Nay, farther it seems to reflect upon the Wisdom and Goodness of God himself, to suffer his whole Creation, which he had been so many Days a working, to be ruin'd in a Moment's Time by a malicious Spirit. I can never think, but that God Almighty would have contrived some Way or other, to have hindred such a fatal Miscarriage, when he so easily might; he would never have left a poor young Creature open to all the Wiles of an old crafty Devil, and have damn'd all her Posterity, for not being so cunning as he.

Cred. This Objection of yours, *Philologus*, is grounded upon a Mistake common to you and some of the ancient Heathens, that a good and a just God could not permit Evil among free Agents. For when any evil Action came to affect them nighly, they were presently up with their *an Diis sint?* And so would chuse to be Atheists, rather than own a God, who would permit any Thing to cross their Humour. Now you make use of the Inverse of that Argument, and would prove that, because there is a good God, therefore he would never suffer such a wicked Action of the Devil. But, that which is the Ground of both these Arguments, is an unreasonable Mistake, viz. the Opinion that a *Just and Wise God cannot permit Evil*. Now it is true, that there are some Part of *natural Evils* which God could not permit, such as might happen to the

God not obliged to keep Man from Sinning by an irresistible Power.

the inanimate Parts of the Creation, as any blundered irregular Formation of their Parts, any Defect in their Nature or Constitution : For all such *Evil* as this must then needs proceed from God, who gave them this irregular Nature, in which they could have no Hand themselves. Therefore we freely own, that God cannot permit *Evil* of this Kind ; because such Permission were tantamount to the doing it. All the Question is, whether he cannot permit *moral Evil* among free Agents, and such natural Evils which are the Punishments of them. Now unless we grant that he could, it is impossible there should be any such Thing as a free Agent, which is to act on either Part. For if God could not permit Evil, then Man could do nothing but Good, then his Actions would all be determined on one Side ; and so could be no more said to be free, than a Stone is such, which necessarily falls downwards. Nor does this Permission at all reflect upon God's Goodness ; for God only gives his Free-Will and Power to his Creatures, which is an Act of Goodness ; but it is owing to their ill Use of it, that they commit Evil. But you'll say it is not the Difficulty how to reconcile God's Holiness with the Permission of Evil ; but how to think he should permit an Evil of so vast a Consequence. Now to this, I answer,

*this would
have de-
stroy'd
Free-Will.*

1st, It must be granted, that *Adam* and *Eve*, who together with the Devil committed this Evil, were free Agents ; and therefore all the Restraints God could lay upon them to resist the Devil's Temptations, must be such as were consonant to their Free-Will. For God to have given them such powerful Influxes of his Spirit, as to have made it impossible for them to Sin, would have been in Effect to have altered their Natures, and to have changed them from *free* to *necessary* Agents. For that would have been to have over-ruled them by as absolute an Impulse, as he does Stones and Trees. All that we can suppose reasonable for God to do is, to dispense to them such abundantly sufficient Measures of his Grace, as might enable them to encounter with the strongest Temptations ; but yet in such a Way, as might be consistent with their

Reason

Reason and Free-Will. Now if such an angelical Guard, as you would have had to keep them from Sinning, had been so continually about them, as to hinder the Devil from proposing any Temptation, or our first Parents from hearkning to any ; if they had supernaturally over-ruled the Organs of their Bodies, or the Inclinations of their Minds, upon the least Tendency to Evil ; God then would not have dealt with them as with Men, but as with Brutes. Besides, God had then put them upon a State of Probation ; but to have over-ruled their Actions, and determined them only on one Side, would have been to have run counter to his own Design ; it would have been to have put them upon a Trial, and at the same Time to have rendered them impossible to be tried. So that let the Miscarriage be of ever so great Consequence, we cannot suppose, that God should act contrary to his Wisdom and eternal Reason, for the Prevention of it.

2dly, There is no Reason, God should have interposed his Omnipotence to have hindered this Sin, because they had Power of their own superabundantly sufficient to avoid it. We, alas ! in this lapsed Condition of ours, find a great deal of Difficulty to encounter with our Temptations ; we feel a great Blindness in our Understandings, and a Crookedness in our Wills ; we experience often an Inclination to do Evil, even before the Temptation comes. But our first Parents in their primitive Rectitude of Nature stood possessed of every Thing as advantageous the other Way ; they had an Understanding naturally large and capacious, and fully illuminated by the divine Spirit ; their Will was naturally inclined to the supreme Good, and could not, without Violence to its Nature, make Choice of any other. Now when God had made such ample Provision for Mankind, to secure them from Sin ; we can never suppose it necessary, for God to employ his Almighty Power besides ; for this would be in a Manner *actum agere*, to do that for them again which he had sufficiently done for them before. But if notwithstanding all these mighty Advantages towards a State of *Impeccancy*, they would resolutely break through them all, their un-

parallel'd Stubbornness and Disobedience is to be blamed, and not the Insufficiency of God's Grace, or the Defect of his Almighty Assistance.

*his Mis-
riage
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3dly, What God did not by his *absolute Power* hinder before, he did by his *Mercy* sufficiently repair afterwards. For presently after the Fall, God the Father agreed to the Mediatorship propounded by God the Son; and then eternal Life, through the Blood of our Saviour, was given (upon our sincere, tho' not unsinning Obedience) after Death, as it was without Death before. And by this wonderful Mercy, after so great a Provocation, the Goodness of God is more abundantly manifested, than by hindring the Sin at first; as Men are more sensibly affected, with a Pardon graciously offered after the Conviction of a Disobedience, than they are by a Dispensation for it, or a Connivence at it.

Phil. As for this Matter, *Credentius*, of the Mediatorship, we shall talk more hereafter; but let us go through the Garden first. And the first Thing, we meet withal, is the two Trees, of singular Qualities indeed; such as silence all the strange Relations, in the *Plinies* and *Theophrastus's*: I mean the *Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil*, and the *Tree of Life*. Now what tolerable Sense can be put upon the Relation of these two Trees? The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil! Why, can ever any one think, that Morality grew upon Trees? This, I'll warrant you, is such a Kind of an Ethical Tree, as *Porphyry's* in Logick. It is very strange, *Credentius*, that we should take so much Pains for a little Science, when our first Parents could get to be so knowing only by eating of Apples. And I am as much perplexed too, about your other Tree, the *Tree of Life*. Now I can never beat it into my dull Brains, how Eternity should grow upon the Tops of Trees; for my Part, I should as soon believe that Lobsters and Red-Herrings grew there. Now if it be asserted, that this Tree was to make Men long-lived, that were to eat of it, and for this Reason was called the *Tree of Life*: I do not see, how this one Tree had been sufficient for all the Progeny of *Adam*, in case they

they had not sinned ; or however, it would have been very inconvenient for Men to have come from *America* to *Eden* for these vivifical Apples. All this looks very surprising, *Credentius*, and is too much like a Piece of the old poetical Divinity.

Cred. It is true, Things look very strange and odd that are unusual ; which makes us we can hardly forbear laughing at an old Fashion, after some Time of Disuse ; tho' we liked it well enough, when it was common. Now *The Relation of the two Trees not ridiculous.* the State of Innocence, and the lapsed State of Mankind, being so very different ; we must suppose, that there were some Things consonant to the first State very disagreeable to our present one ; and this is but reasonable to imagine. Now of a great Number of these, *Moses* has reckoned but a few, amongst which are these Trees. As for the *Tree of Life*, I cannot imagine any Thing more agreeable to such a State of Innocence. Now a State of Innocence supposes Immortality, for Death came by Sin ; and something was requisite to make Men immortal, when their Bodies naturally were not so. Indeed God might have done this, by his immediate Almighty Power ; but he generally co-operates with second Causes. Now what fitter Means can we suppose, for the continual Renovation of Men's Bodies, without any Manner of Decay, than the Fruit of such a Tree ? If some Food of an extraordinary Quality be requisite, why not the Fruit of a Tree, as well as the Flesh of an Animal ; as well as an Herb, a Root, or any Thing else ? When God had designed, that Men's Bodies should never yield to Decay or Death ; methinks it was very reasonable, for him to direct them to the Eating a certain Fruit of a Tree, whose Juice was of that spirituous Nature, as to impregnate their Blood with an indefectible Vigour, and to keep them in a constant Youth, without Pain, or Disease, or Imbecillity, 'till such Time as he should translate them to a better World. And this I take to be the Use of the Tree of Life. It is uncertain, whether or no this Tree was but one single one, and always to be continued in *Eden*, if there had been no Lapse ; it is most probable,

many of them would have been transplanted to other Parts of the World, as the innocent Off-spring had increased: But when Mankind had sinned, it is probable that God destroyed this Species out of the World, as being now grown useless, and inconsistent with the Curse and Punishment of Man. And this the Heathens seem to have some traditional Notion of, when they speak of the *Nectar* and *Ambrosia*, which maintained the Immortality of their Gods, and *Moly*, which was the great *Panacea*, celebrated by the Heathen Poets. As for the *Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil*, it was, I suppose, called so, not because it had a Virtue to confer any such Knowledge; but because the Devil pretended in his Temptation of the Woman it had, it receiving its Name from that unfortunate Deception. And tho' God calls it the *Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil*, before the Fall, yet that is related by *Moses* by Way of Anticipation; as if I should say the *Romans* encamped in *Essex*, or *Middlesex*, tho' neither of those Places were then known by that Name. And as for that other Place, v. 22. *Behold the Man is become as one of us to know Good and Evil*: I look upon that to be only a bitter Irony, to upbraid Man with his foolish Disobedience and Disappointment.

Phil. I suppose you will hardly be able to get off so well with your four Rivers, as you have done with your two Trees. I find here, that your inspired Author was as bad at Geography, as the *Turks* are at Chronology: They have both a good Will to their Cause, and therefore will garnish it out with all the fine Things they ever heard of. Thus the *Turks*, when they would make King *Solomon* as brave a Man as they can, make *Alexander* the great the Master of his Horse, and twenty other great Men Lacqueys and Foot-Boys to him: And thus *Moses*, when he would describe a curious Garden, makes four of the greatest Rivers in the World, to be in lieu of Canals in it. He does not matter the great Distance of Place, and the different Sources of the Rivers; but jumbles together all *Asia*, and *Africk*, to make a pretty little Garden for *Adam* to dress. Here is *Tigris*, and *Euphrates*, and

and *Nilus*, and *Ganges*, as the Interpreters explain them, which have their Origin in this Spot of Ground ; so that it must reach at least, from the Fountain of *Nile*, (*i. e.*) from the Midland of *Africa*, to *India*. All this is very strange, *Credentius*.

Cred. To this we answer, *Philologus*, 1st, It is not certain from the *Mosaical Relation*, of what Extent this *Gan-Eden*, or Paradise was. It might be, for ought we know, a very considerable Part of the habitable Earth ; which the *Ante-diluvians* were kept out of, or at least were so for a considerable Time. Now, if *Eden* was of so large a Circumference, it might afford an Origin to several very distant Rivers : So that *Adam* might only cultivate that Part of it, which he was first placed in. 2^{dly}, It is likewise very uncertain, what Rivers are meant by these Hebrew Names. As for the Interpreters, they are so various in their Conjectures, that it would be tedious to recount them. It seems most probable to me, that these Rivers are only some Branches of the River *Euphrates*, if so be the Chanel of the River had a Being before the Flood. 3^{dly}, It can never be exactly known where these Rivers were, because of the great Alteration made in the World by the Deluge, which has mightily altered, or it may be obliterated their Course. For I believe, that at the Flood, the mighty Confluence of Waters over the Face of the Earth, and the breaking open the Deep or subterraneous Waters, turned the Earth into something like its Chaotick 'Iav's, or that Mud it was at the first Creation ; so that the Course of Rivers must be altered, by the washing away their Banks, and the choaking up their Chanels. And therefore it is in vain, to seek for these *Ante-diluvian* Rivers, in those Courses of Waters, that trickle over the Earth now. And therefore you do very ill, to censure the *Mosaical Writings*, because you cannot find those Rivers now a-days, which he speaks of before the Flood.

Phil. But by the Way, Sir, if *Moses* describes these Rivers as they were before the Flood, which you suppose to be different from what they are now ; this will

Difficulties
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D.R. p.37. render it a very idle and superfluous Description. For he describes these Rivers of Paradise, only to find out the Situation of it ; but if these Rivers were such, as were defaced in the Deluge, one can no more find out the Situation of Paradise by this, than if he had only mentioned the Man in the Moon.

*Moses did
not give
Account of
the Rivers
to find out
Paradise by.*

Cred. You are much mistaken, *Philologus*, to think, that the Aim of *Moses*, in this Description of the Rivers, was for Men to find out Paradise by ; for the Holy Scripture does not use to condescend, to satisfy Men's inquisitive Curiosities. It was the Design of the Holy Ghost, in this Relation, to acquaint Posterity with the Beauty of that happy Place, which our first Parents unfortunately forfeited ; but, I dare say, it was not the least of his Intention, to leave Minutes for witty Men to write Books, and draw Maps by. But, I pray, was there never a Description made of any Thing, but only to teach Men how to find it by ? Some Things are described, that are past and gone, as the Relation of the Actions of Men, Sieges, Battles, Tumults, &c. and so are impossible to be found ; other Things are related in a shorter Manner, when they need not be found, as *Paul* was buried at *Rome*, *Pompey* was conquered at *Philippi* : Now it would be Non-sense in the Historians, to describe exactly the Vault or Spot of Ground where the Apostle's Body was laid, or to shew the particular Ground which was covered by each Army ; so that the Reader, if he pleased, might go directly to them. Should Historians do this, it would make their Writings as tedious and ridiculous, as a Story that is filled up with nothing but *I said, and he said, and I said again.* Therefore the Prophet's Description of Paradise is very proper, to give the Reader an Account, what Kind of Place Paradise was ; but as for the finding out the Place, it is neither necessary for us to know, nor for him to relate, with such Particularity.

Phil. The next Thing, *Credentius*, I have to accost you with, is, The Great Law which *Adam* and *Eve* were to be tried by, and all Mankind stand or fall, by the keeping, or the breaking of it. Now one would think, that

a Law,

a Law, upon which Effects of so vast a Consequence did depend, must be some mighty wise Precept in it self, most admirably conduced to the Good of Mankind, and the Honour and Wisdom of the Legislator ; but instead of this, we find only a poor little trivial Thing commanded, only forsooth the not eating an Apple. A reasonable Man would suppose, that these wise Couple, with the supralapsarian Knowledge, should have had a Law given them for their Trial, suitable to their great Capacities ; some super-eminent Rules of moral Virtue, such as Philosophers talk of, and leave for others to practise ; some noble Part of your Christian Charity, or seraphick Love, which some of your melting Divines make such fine Speeches upon : These would have been Precepts agreeable to that wise and glorious State ; but such a ludicrous Law as this does not only seem to be an undervaluing to the Wisdom of the Deity, but even to Man himself, to be dealt with so like a Child, as this comes to.

Cred. I perceive this is an Argument, which Infidels *The Reasonableness of the prohibitive Precept.* have made use of in all Ages, down from Julian and Celsus, to the little Coffee-House and Tavern-Wits in our Time. But for my Part, I could never see any Strength in this Argument, nor any Ridiculousness in this Law, nor any Thing fit to be laughed at, but only their foolish Management of it. As for your Exceptions against this Law, that it was the Prohibition of such a small indifferent Thing, and not some great Rule of Morality ; will you be pleased to take this Answer, which I am persuaded will satisfy you, or will at least silence you from making Sport with this Passage of Scripture any more.

It is acknowledged by all, that the *Mosaical* Tables are a good short System of Morality, and take in all the general Heads of moral Virtues ; and therefore we will run through these, and see if any Precept here was so fit to be given *Adam* for a Trial, as that which *Moses* said he had. To begin with the first Table which relates to the Divine Worship and Reverence. Suppose the *Worship of false Gods*, or Image-worship, had been forbidden him ; had not that been ten Times more ridiculous than

A CONFERENCE.

the Apple? For the Worship of false Gods was a Thing, which came into the World several hundreds of Years afterwards, when Men grew so stupid as to take the Sun and Moon for Gods, and began to flatter their Princes into divine Honours. Neither would the Prohibition of *Image-Worship* have been any Trial; for we can never suppose *Adam* to have been such a Sot, as to have made an Image, and to have fell down before it himself. Besides, Images were long after brought into Worship, either to flatter living Princes, or else to supply the Place of dead ones, whom the silly People fancied were become Gods. Neither would the Prohibition of Perjury or vain Swearing, have been a better Way of Probation. Perjury was a Thing not to be heard of, till the World was better peopled; when Commerce and Trade came into Use, when Courts of Judicature were settled, when Men began to cheat one another, and then to deny it and forswear it. And vain Oaths could never have a Being in a State of Innocence, for they must have their Origin in a corrupt lying State of the World; when Men began to use them to ascertain others, they were sincere in this Matter, tho' they might be false in other Matters; till afterwards, by frequent Use, they grew habitual and customary Words. Neither were any Particularities in the *Divine Worship* proper to be commanded them; for Temples, and Priests, and Garments, and weekly and anniversary Holidays, &c. were Things perfectly inconsistent with that Infant-state of the World. The like may be said of other Duties commanded in the second Table. How could *Adam* have honoured his Father and Mother, when he never had any? What Temptation could he possibly have, to be guilty of Murder, when there was no Man or Woman in the World, but his own Wife; whom if he should destroy, he would not only be excluded from Marriage again, but must needs spend his whole Life after, in a miserable Solitude? How could he commit Adultery, when *Eve* was the only Woman upon Earth? How could he be guilty of Theft, when he was the sole Lord of all the Creation? How could he bear false Witness against his

Neigh-

Neighbour, or covet his Goods, when there was no Neighbour in the World for him to be thus unjust to. And so if you go on to the Christian Precepts : What Part of Charity was he in a Capacity of exercising ? How could he forgive Injuries and love Enemies, who had no one to offend against him ? What charitable Wishes and Thoughts could he have of his Neighbour, when as yet there was neither Neighbour nor Sin in the World ? How was it possible for him, to exercise the Duties of Mortification, Self-denial, and taking up the Cross, who had no Lust to conquer, no Passions to overcome, who lived in such a delicious Place as he could experience no Want or Disquiet ? As for the Love of God, that was as natural to the Soul before the Fall, as it is for the Body to eat and drink ; so that to have made that his Trial, would have been as absurd, as to have bid him to be sure to walk upon the Ground, and breath in the Air, which he could not but do. It remains therefore, that his Probation was most properly to be performed, by a Command of doing or forbearing some *indifferent Action*, which was neither Good nor Evil, but only as it was commanded or forbidden. Now if it be requisite or fitting, that his Obedience should be tried in doing or forbearing such an indifferent Thing ; why was not this first Law for forbearing this Fruit of a certain Tree in the Garden, as proper as a Law prohibiting any indifferent Thing else ? Nay there is more Reason for this Prohibition, than that of other Things ; because that which was prohibited, was natural and apposite, not strange and far-fetched. The first Parents being to live in a Garden, what more natural to be forbidden them, than the eating such a Sort of Fruit ? If some odd strange Thing had been commanded them, which had no Manner of Relation to their Way of living, we might have had something to say against it. If they had been commanded not to study Mathematicks or Magick, to make long Pilgrimages to *Mecca* or *Loretto*, to climb once or twice a Year up to the Top of Mount *Caucasus*, or a thousand more of these indifferent Things, only to try their Obedience ; there would be none of them

them half so proper as this, which God made Choice of; nay, I defy the Wit of Mankind to find out an indifferent Thing to be prohibited, which was so natural and agreeable to the State of Mankind then, as this was. So that this Law is so far from being ridiculous and ludicrous, that it must seem very wise and reasonable, and grounded upon a very judicious Choice to all considering Men.

Phil. This is pretty plausible, *Credentius*. But then I can never reconcile the Severity of the Curse, which followed upon this Disobedience, with the Goodness, or indeed the Justice of God. We hardly now-a-days reckon on the robbing of an Orchard a Crime worth a Whipping; and therefore how can we suppose, that *Adam* and *Eve*, and all their harmless Posterity, should be doomed to eternal Damnation, only for eating a Couple of Apples, they were not to meddle with? Methinks, this is very rigid Justice, to inflict such heavy Punishments, as these are, for such a little Peccadillo.

Cred. It is a very great Mistake, *Philologus*, to imagine, that this Sin of our first Parents was such a little Slip, as you would pretend. It was the greatest Sin which ever was committed, unles it be the Sin against the Holy Ghost: For, if we consider the Nature of the Crime, the mighty Complication of Offences in it, and the great Advantages they had to avoid it; nothing can appear more heinous. For this Sin was, not only a bare Disobedience to God's Command, but a perfect *Infidelity* to God's Promises and Threats; it was a Sort of *Idolatry*, in believing the Devil, and putting a greater Trust in him than God; it was a horrible *Pride* in them to desire to be *like God*, such a diabolical *Pride*, as made the evil Angels fall from their first Estate; it was a very great *Covetousness* and *Theft*, to desire, and to purloin that, which was none of their own; it was a Sort of the most cruel and unparalleled *Murder*, to kill and destroy the poor Souls of so many thousand of their Off-spring. Consider again, that this was a Disobedience against God, an infinite Being, and of infinite Dignity; a God that had

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had given them a Being, and that so very lately too, the Impresses of which could not be worn out of their Memory; that had bestowed so much Happiness upon them, more than on all the Creation besides; that had made them Lords over it all, and restrained nothing from them, but only the Fruit of this one Tree. Consider farther, that they committed this Sin against the clearest Conviction of Conscience, when they had Minds fully illuminated with the divine Spirit, and had all possible Assurances of Grace to keep them from Sin, and had no unoward Bent of Nature, and unruly Passions to provoke them to it. Now to take all this together, it was a mighty Aggravation of their Sin, and sets it at so high a Rate, that it is hardly possible, for a Man, now a-days, to commit a Crime of so great an Enormity. So that, *Philologus*, this was so far from being one of your Peccadillo's, that it assaulted Heaven with the highest Provocation.

Phil. But I know not how to reconcile with the Justice of God this Curse of his; to punish all *Adam's* Posterity, for his and his Wife's Sin. Why should so many poor innocent Wretches, that are born from their Loins, suffer for the Sins of their great great Grand-father? We should think it very hard, for the King to hang up a Number of his Subjects, only because their Predecessors were engaged in the Baron's Wars: And can we think that God Almighty will be so unmerciful, as to call us to an Account for the Crime of an old Fore-father, committed above five thousand Years ago? Your Divines may say what they please of original Sin; but I can no more be persuaded, that Sin can go in a Blood, than that a Man's Notions and Learning can: For I believe a Man may be born a Philosopher, or a Divine, as well as he can be born a Sinner. But suppose there was such a traductive Guilt, a Man would no more deserve Punishment for it, than he would do for inheriting his Father's Distempers; which, methinks, does deserve Pity, and not Punishment. Indeed you would fain salve all this Hardship, by the Benefits of your Christian Baptism;

tism ; but then you leave all the poor Children which die unbaptised to make Faggots for the Devil. This severè Curse, especially as your Christian Theologers explain it, does by no Means agree with the divine Justice and Clemency ; nay, it seems inconsistent with his Holiness too, because this Guilt must be infused into the Soul by God when he makes it ; which does argue a double Pravity in the Deity, first to implant Sin in Man, and then to punish him for it.

Cred. The Propagation of original Sin, and the Punishment which attends it, is not so inconsistent with the Justice of God, as Pelagians and Infidels do pretend : For,

1st, *This original Sin is not any vicious Habit infused into our Souls by God* ; for that was to make God the Author of it. It is only an Obliquity of our Nature, and a Tendency to Evil, as being descended from a corrupt Stock, which cannot produce a pure Off-spring ; so that God is not to be blamed any more, for suffering such an impure Progeny to be born from our first Parents, than he is for letting four Fruit arise from a Tree degenerated by our ill Husbandry, or diseased Children from vicious Parents. Indeed in all Ages, Divines have troubled themselves, to explain how this Obliquity should be conveyed to all Mankind, and the Generality of them agree, that it comes from the defect of *original Righteousness*, or the withdrawing of that supernatural Grace, which was so plentifully bestowed upon the primæval Parents, and they have forfeited for us ; so that that Bar, which was to hinder us from Sin, is now taken away, and so we rush with Precipitancy upon it ; that *Frænum* as they call it, that Bridle, which was to restrain our animal Faculties is lost by their Sin, and so now, like an unruly Horse, they over-power, and run away with our Reason. The *Cartesians* explain its Traduction, by the Imagination of the Mother, who as she by her Frights, Desires, Aversions, &c. imprints the same Passions upon the Child she is pregnant with, and makes it liable to them afterwards ; so by her Aversions to Good, and Proneness to Evil, she trans-

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mits the same Tendencies to her *Fætus*; and by this means they will have original Sin traduced from *Eve* down to us. Neither of which Explications are inconsistent with the divine Justice; for God was neither obliged to continue this supernatural Grace to all *Adam's* Posterity; nor bound to frame the Nature of Mankind anew, or to raise up a purer Breed from the first corrupted Stock.

2dly, *The Off-spring of Adam had no Title to that Immortality, and other Blessings, which he forfeited for them.* God Almighty might, if he pleased, have made Mankind at first mortal, and subject to all the Diseases and Disorders, which are the Preliminaries of Death, and the Punishments of Sin; for we had no Right to demand from him to be created more happy than the Brutes. Therefore, we have no Reason to repine at God's Goodness, for not giving us that Happiness after *Adam's* Sin; which we never had a Right to before, but only a Possibility of having. It is our Duty to thank God, for what we do enjoy, and not to murmur at his Goodness, and tax his Justice for what we do not.

3dly, Our first Parents might forfeit these Blessings for us; and God might justly deny them to us, by Reason of their Sin. I do not see any great Force in that Notion of Divines, which makes the first Parents our Representatives, and so makes us to sin in them *interpretative*, as the Schools speak, and therefore to deserve their Punishment: For I cannot apprehend, how any one should be my Representative, without being delegated to personate me by my own proper and voluntary Act; and I can less apprehend, why God should punish me, for what they did in my Name, which I never agreed to. But it is very agreeable to the divine Justice, for God to promise several Blessings to *Adam*, and his Posterity, upon his Obedience, which neither he nor his Posterity should enjoy upon his Disobedience. And this seems very just to us, by our often doing the like in our human Affairs, without being taxed with the least Injustice; as if I leave a thousand Pounds a Year to such a Man and his Heirs for ever, conditionally, that he performs such

Things

Things as my Will directs ; but neither he, nor his Posterity, has a Right to the Estate, if that Person neglects to perform them. And this vindicates sufficiently the divine Justice in not contributing the supernatural Grace to keep Men from Sinning, and in inflicting Death, (*i. e.*) not conferring Immortality ; both which were to be conferred upon *Adam*, and his Posterity, only upon Condition of his Obedience.

4thly, Men justly deserve all the Punishments of Sin by their own proper Transgression. If Men were to undergo Sickness, Afflictions in this World, and eternal Damnation in the next, purely upon Account of *Adam's* Sin, there would be something in your Argument ; but when all Men commit Sin by their own proper Act, they can have no Reason to complain for suffering that which by their actual Disobedience they have merited.

5thly, But then, lastly, as for Children, who die before they commit actual Sin, and are not baptised ; *It is no Part of our Christian Faith to believe that they are damned.* For tho' the Scripture says expressly, *Except one be born again of Water, and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*, Joh. iii. 5. yet charitable Christians, in all Ages, have understood this Necessity to be, where the Sacrament might conveniently be had, and where there was no Contempt of it. And therefore, many of the Fathers have assigned a middle Place for such unbaptised Infants, which was a Place neither of Joy nor Pleasure. And to this Opinion St. *Austin* himself was inclined, *Lib. 3. de Lib. Arbit. Cap. 23.* who was the severest of the Ancients to unbaptised Children, before his Disputes with *Pelagius*, who asserted that all Children were undoubtedly saved. But however uncharitable the Papists may be to unbaptised Infants ; it is the charitable Opinion of most Protestants, that such Children are left to the Goodness of a merciful God, who is not tied up to his own Ordinances, who it is hoped will save them ; tho' not by an ordinary, yet he may do it by an uncovenanted Grace.

Phil. There is another Thing, *Credentius*, in this Curse, which does not go down glibly with us, and that is the Curse of the Ground. For this seems to be an Action unbecoming the Deity ; it looks like the frantick Passion of an angry Man, who, when he is displeased, revenges himself upon every Thing that is nigh him. So here *Moses*, who had not the Philosophy to divest the Deity of Passion, brings him in raving upon the Loss of his two Apples, and cursing them all round ; and that nothing might escape his Fury, the poor Earth too is made barren, in the midst of the angry Fit. Such an Action as this, *Credentius*, looks unbecoming a wise Man, who takes Care not only to avoid Passion, but to distribute the Punishments to the Parties offending ; and therefore this History must be very injurious to the supreme Wisdom of the Deity, to make the Earth suffer for the Sin of Man ; or because God was angry with *Adam*, to represent him wrecking his Fury upon the innocent Earth.

Cred. I suppose, *Philologus*, you do not lay much Stress upon the Innocency of the Earth, or the Injustice of the Curse being laid upon it. For Innocency and Injustice have Place only among rational, or at least, sensible Creatures ; the Ground can neither be innocent nor guilty, it is neither capable of receiving a Kindness, nor an Injury ; because it wants Sense to perceive them. Neither does it imply any Absurdity, that the Earth should be cursed, for the Sin of Man ; for this is consonant to the general Opinion of Mankind in Things of the like Nature. For the ancient Heathen had not only their *Piacula*, Things accursed by Way of Transmutation of Punishment, and their *Dies nefandi*, accursed Times ; but even their *Campi scelerati*, accursed Fields. But your principal Mistake is, that you fancy this Curse of the Earth by God Almighty, to be an Effect of his Anger, or a weak human-like Passion, when it is only the Result of a wise and equitable Justice. For we can never suppose so wise a Man as *Moses*, to have such a silly Notion of a Deity as this comes to, to make him curse the Earth in an angry Mood, because Man had vexed him. For his Cursing the Ground was

*The Cursing
the Ground
no Reflecti-
on upon the
Deity.*

was only a present Punishment of Man, that had offended ; for it was Man, that was to suffer by this Curse of it, and not the Ground it self. The Ground felt no Harm, by bringing forth *Thorns and Thistles* ; but Man was a sufficient Sufferer by it, when he, by the *Sweat of his Brows*, was forced to keep it in an ordinary Fertility, and much inferior to its paradisiacal Fruitfulness.

O. R. *Phil.* Such another odd Kind of indecent Passion does your Jewish Legislator attribute to the Deity ; when he, in the same Fit of Anger, metamorphoses the poor Serpent, because the Devil made use of his Body. Besides, I cannot imagine how that should be a Punishment to the Serpent, which seems to be natural to it ; for 'tis as natural for a Serpent to creep, as for a Man to walk. And he might as well have made it a Punishment, for a Man to stand bolt upright, as for the Serpent to creep upon the Ground. But be this as it will, and grant it a Punishment for the Serpent to creep ; how did the poor Beast deserve such a Punishment ? How could it help or hinder the Possession of the Devil ? Or why should God be more angry at the Serpent so possessed, than he was at the Demoniacks in the Gospel ?

Cred. I find you are mightily concerned, that no Injustice should be offered to brute Beasts, when you do not care how much you do to this divine Writer and Prophet of God, by exposing his Writings without any Ground. But I pray, what Injustice was it to the Serpent, to have his Form something altered from what it was before ? I am confident he was not able to distinguish, whether it was altered, or no ; for that would imply an intelligent Nature, to have contemplated his former State, and to have compared it with his latter, which it was impossible for the Serpent to have done. But to receive a new Shape, which he did not know whether it was better or worse, without any sensible Pain or Alteration to him ; and this too done by an Almighty Power, to whom he owed his whole Being, and could claim nothing at his Hands : This is so far from being Injustice, that it is Bounty still. Besides, Man being Lord of the

Creation,

Nor the
Curse of
the Serpent.

Creation, had a natural Right over the Serpent ; and this Change being designed by God for Man's Good and Instruction, there was no more Injustice in changing the Form of the Serpent for his Sake, than in suffering other Creatures to be slain for his Food. Nor lastly, must we suppose, that God Almighty was any Ways offended at the Serpent, because the Devil had possessed his Organs ; but the Reason he worked this Change in his Body was, because it should remain as a Monument of the unhappy Fall, of God's Aversation to Sin, and to deter Men from the Commission of that, which brought such Vengeance with it. This was no *proper* Punishment of the Serpent, but only an *instructive Emblem* to Mankind ; such as our Saviour's Curseing of the Fig-Tree, not to punish the Wood, but to read the Disciples an Emblematical Lecture, what they were to expect, if they did not bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance. Neither is it disagreeable to the Reason of Mankind, to have a proper Punishment inflicted upon the Serpent for being the Instrument of this unhappy Miscarriage ; any more than it is, when we destroy Knives, and Swords, and Beasts, that have been instrumental in any Man's Murder. As for the natural Reptility of the Serpent, it is plain from this History it is false ; and we suppose the Change to be from such a bright winged *Seraph*, as was before mentioned, to a mean creeping Snake.

Phil. Well ! but what think you, *Credentius*, of the opening *Adam's Eyes* by the eating the Apple, and his seeing himself naked, which he knew not of before ? I protest this looks very strange : For Blindness was but a very sorrowful Ingredient in the paradisiacal State. And if they could not have seen their Nakedness before, yet methinks their other Senses would have informed them : Or if they had not, I do not think they were any great Losers by their Expulsion ; for their Loss of the Orchard was abundantly compensated by the Use of their Eyes.

Cred. The Phrase *to open Eyes*, among the *Jews*, does not denote always a Cure of Blindness, as is frequent in the History of the Gospel ; but oftentimes metaphorically

O. R.

cally does signify the sudden Coming of any Thing to a Man's Knowledge, by any Way whatsoever. Thus God is said to *open the Eyes of Balaam*, when the Angel represented himself in a bodily Shape to him, *Numb. xxii. 31.* And thus the Disciples *Eyes were opened*, when they recollected, that the Person, that had discoursed with them in the Way to *Emmaus*, was the Lord. Not that these were blind before, but because they came suddenly to know something, which they were ignorant of before; by some new surprising Illumination, and clearing up, as it were, the Eyes of their Understanding. Thus our first Parents, after the Fall, presently came to find the irregular Effects of their corrupted Nature; or what the Scripture here calls *Nakedness*. By which Word, according to the usual Modesty of the Hebrew Tongue, is understood all the irregular Appetites to venereal Pleasures, which they were Strangers to in their State of Innocence; and began now at first to experience; and were therefore ashamed of their soul Degeneracy, and upon this Account were desirous of Cloathing to hide those Irregularities from the Sight of others.

Phil. But then this Explication, *Credentius*, makes this
O.R. p.43. *Pudor circa res venereas* subsequent only to the Fall, whereas it is congenite to his Nature; and is not only implanted in Mankind, but in other Animals, which seem to have some Kind of Shame in such Matters.

Cred. I think it can never be proved, that irrational Creatures have any Sense of Shame in venereal Matters; but the Contrary is evident from their publick Commixtures. Besides, before the Fall, when Man's Appetites were more regular; there was no Room for this Shame, which had its Beginning upon the Corruption of his Nature.

Phil. There is, Sir, another very great Difficulty in this History; and that is in the Relation of their Cloathing, after they were discovered to be naked. Now the Text tells us, that they sewed together Fig-leaves, and
O.R. p.44. therewith made themselves Aprons: From whence forsooth we may deduce the Original of the Taylor's Trade.

But

But then the Mischief is, what they shall do for Thread and Needles ; for Spinning was not as yet found out, and Working in Iron was an Invention of much later Date. So again v. 21. when God takes the Tayloring-work into his own Hands, or at least an Angel by his Appointment, *And unto Adam, and also to his Wife, did the Lord God make Coats of Skins, and cloathed them :* This Angel then must kill, and flea the Animals, and strip off their Skins to keep *Adam* and *Eve* warm ; now methinks this smells more of the Butcher, or the Hangman, than the Angel. Besides, these Leathern Coats would be purchased by the Destruction of at least one whole Species ; for if either Male or Female of any Kind had been destroyed, at the first Creation, as this was, there must a Species be lost for ever ; for it is not believed, that there were more than two of each Kind created ; and one alone without another for its Consort, could never have produced any Off-spring.

Cred. Here are in this Objection, *Philologus*, several No Absurd Suppositions, which are all very wild ; and if they are denied, the Argument falls to the Ground. For, 1st, You suppose that they sewed the Fig-leaves together as Taylors do their Cloth, with Needle and Thread, which is more than the Scripture does imply. For the original Word *Tapar* signifies no more than to *put together, to apply, to fit* : As 'tis used, *Job* xvi. 15. *applied Sackcloth to his Skin.* And the Women in *Ezekiel* are reproved for wearing *Pillows under their Arm-pits*, *Ezra* xiii. 18. where we cannot suppose that *Job* sewed the Sackcloth to his Skin, or that those delicate Women tacked their Pillows to their Flesh with Needle and Thread. And the word *Gneleh*, which we render *Leaves*, signifies also Branches of Trees, such as were to make *Booths*, or *Bowers*, *Neh. viii. 15.* So that *to adapt, or fit Branches*, which we render *sew Leaves together*; is only to twist or plat the flexible Branches of the Fig-Tree round about their Wastes, in the Manner of a *Roman Crown* ; so that when the broad Leaves of that Tree hung down, it represented the Fashion of a Pair of green *Breeches*.

2dly, You suppose, that God, or some Angel, must make them their Coats of Skin ; which I think is by no Means necessary. For it is a known Observation in the Hebrew Tongue, that it is used to attribute many Things to God, which are not done by his immediate Act, but sometimes by his Direction, and sometimes by the Permission of his ordinary Providence. So here the Coats are said to be made by God, whereas 'tis probable they only received Instruction how to make them ; or only, perhaps, because they were the Gift of God, as all other Blessings ; as God is said to give a Man Health, or Wealth, or Strength.

3dly, You suppose that God could not provide for them these Coats, without destroying a whole Species, which is a very bold Assertion. For it is not certain, what Number of Animals of a Sort were created, and therefore the Supposition is weak. Neither is it known how long after the Creation these Coats were made : In all Probability it was not till the Winter following ; and by that time Hares, Conies, &c. had Time sufficient to multiply considerably.

Phil. But next, for the Close of all this fine Relation, there is a Story, which out-does all the Histories of enchanted Islands and Castles, that ever were seen ; and that is the Story of the Angels with their flaming Sword, *which turned every Way, to keep the Way of the Tree of Life* ; That is, a Guard of Cherubim are placed at the Entrance of the Garden, with a great two-handed flaming Sword, that continually waved about the same, for fear, least by open Force, or by Stealth, *Adam and Eve* should have repossessed themselves again of those happy Mansions. Now is not this very pleasant, to have Angels like Centinels, with drawn Swords before the Doors of the Garden, for I know not how many Ages, as Dragons are feigned by the Poets to have guarded the Apples of the *Hesperides*? But, I pray, how long did this angelical Guard last ? To the Flood, I suppose, if not longer. So that you here suppose the Angels, to have been for above 1500 Years employed in keeping a

Garden.

Garden. *Sic vacat exignis rebus adesse Deis?* How much easier would it have been, to have turned a River round the Garden? which would as effectually have kept *Adam* and *Eve* out, who knew nothing of Navigation, as all this Brigade of Cherubim.

Cred. I fancy, *Philologus*, you have been lately at *Bar-tholomew-Fair*, or at least you have been there since you have vouchsafed to look into your Bible: For this Argument of yours seems mostly to be taken out of the famous *Puppet-Opera* of the Creation of the World, which I have some Remembrance of, ever since I was a Boy. For this great too-handed flaming Sword smells more of the *Booth* than the *Bible*. For that which is commonly rendred *flaming Sword*, is only in the Original the *Flame of Cutting*, or *Division*, or a *dividing Flame*; for though the same Word does signify Sword, it does also signify Division. And the Writers of the New Testament do translate the same Word both Ways. For, whereas St. *Matthew* says, our Saviour is come to send a *Sword*, Matt. x. 34. St. *Luke* says, he is come to send *Division*, Luk. xii. 51. So that this *dividing Flame*, or *fiery Division*, is but answerable to the *Wall of Fire* spoken of by the Prophet *Zachary*, chap. ii. 5. which the Lord promised to make about *Jerusalem*. It was the Accension of some inflammable Matter, round about the Garden, which excluded all Comers to it, till such Time as the Beauty of the Place was defaced. Now this Opinion must be more probable to them, who place Paradise in the eastern Parts of the World, especially about *Babylon*, where there is such an Abundance of *Naphtha* and *Bitumen*, according to the Relations of *Pliny*, *Plutarch*, *Strabo*, and *Curtius*; and where there are Fields, which even yet, at some Times of the Year, seem all on Fire. But then you will be apt to say, what have these Cherubim or Angels to do with this *fiery Wall*? I answer, it is the Custom of the *Hebrews* to express all the extraordinary Works of God by Angels, as to call a Plague, Famine, &c. a destroying Angel; nay, farther, they being averse from the Philosophy of mechanick and material Principles used to ex-

plain the common *Phænomena* of Nature by vital, pneumatick, or which is the same, angelick Principles. So the *Psalmist* explains the Motions of Winds, and the Burning of Fire, to be performed by the Ministry and Energy of Angels : *Who maketh his Angels Spirits or Winds, and his Ministers a flaming Fire, Psal. civ. 4.* So that, in short, by the *Cherubim and flaming Division*, here is understood only a fiery Wall or Circle, encompassing the Garden, supernaturally raised for the Defence of it. What have you to object next ?

Phil. Why truly, Sir, I think I have tired you enough with Resolving the Doubts of a scrupulous Conscience ; and indeed you have done *Moses* that Justice, and me that Satisfaction which I did not expect ; so that I have a much better Opinion of the *Mosaical* Writings, than what I came hither with. But altho' there may not be so many Absurdities in this Relation of his, as some Men pretend ; yet I do not think that a sufficient Reason for a Man to embrace it. For it is but a very poor Argument for the Truth or Goodness of an Author, that he does not talk Nonsense, or contradict himself. There is many an Author, which you and I have little Value for, who does not talk of *Garagantua's* and *Mazarillo's* ; and yet he may have ne'er a Word of Truth in him neither. And possibly I may have the same Opinion of this *Mosaical* Relation of the Fall ; unless you can oblige me with some Arguments to advance its Credibility ; which I am afraid you will be at a Loss for : unless you will take up with the allegorical Hypothesis, and make it only a divine Fable, which, by the Way, I take to be the best Way of freeing *Moses* from those Difficulties which vulgar Apprehensions cast on him. Now I can be pretty well reconciled to this his Relation of the Fall, if you will allow it only to have an allegorical Meaning, and that the Prophet spake only in a hidden *Cabbala*, and did not design to be understood literally. And if you go this Way to work, this Relation then will appear rational enough. For probably, the whole History of the Fall is but one Hieroglyphick put into writing ; to represent the *wēggūnōs*, or Fall of

of the Soul, when it was embodied in some pristin State. Now I suppose the Hieroglyphick to be this, *A Serpent with a Woman delivering an Apple to a Man*: Which does most excellently set forth such a Lapſe of the Soul; for I suppose the Soul, when ever it did fall, fell by immersing it ſelf in ſensual Pleaſures; and probably was incited to it, by the Inſinuation of malicious *Dæmons*. Now by the *Woman* and the *Apple* are fitly repreſented all Kind of ſensual Pleaſures, Wine, Venery, &c. the *Serpent* is the crafty *Dæmon* which did entice the Soul, and the *Man* the Soul ſo enticed: And then there is ſome Sense in ſuch an Hieroglyphick. But the Reaſon why *Moses* delivered this in Words at Length, and not in Figures, was to beat it into the Heads of the thick-scull'd *Jews*, who, it may be, had not Wit enough to understand a Picture; or, it may be, for fear they ſhould improve it into Image-Worſhip, which he had ſuch an Abhorrence to.

Cred. I do design before we part, *Philologus*, to offer you ſome Arguments to ſhew the Excellence of the *Mosaick Relation* of the Fall; but in the mean Time I will ſpeak a Word or two concerning the allegorical Sense which you would put upon it. Now I think that an allegorical Sense is inconsistent with this Relation, and cannot ſo much as be pretended without offering the greatest Violence imaginable to it. For, 1ſt, This whole Book is historical, and this Relation of the Fall is deliver'd in the ſame narratory Way as the rest of the Book of *Genesis* is. Now nothing is more contrary to History than Allegory or Fable; for one pretends *prima facie*, to deliver Truth undisguised; the other to deliver Truth at the Bottom, under the Colour and Disguife of ſpecious Fictions. But where-ever ſuch Kind of allegorising Fable is allowed, it muſt, I ſay, *prima facie*, appear to be *Fable*, or *Parable*; or otherwife it would be a Lye, a Legend, or a Romance. So when *Aſop* tells us the Story of the *Dunghill-Cock*, and our Saviour that of *Dives* and *Lazarus*, they do it in ſuch a Way as they cannot be understood in a literal Sense. But when *Thucydides* relates the Plague of *Athens*, or *Livy* the Battle at *Canna*, a Man would be mad that ſhould go

to allegorise those Passages. So here in the Book of *Genesis*, what more Reason have Men to turn the Relation of the Fall into an Allegory or Fable, than they have to do the History of *Abraham*, and the other Patriarchs, or the History of *Cain* or *Abel*? All the Book besides is allow'd to be literal; and why should this Part of it be only a Piece of *Ægyptian Hieroglyphick*? If we should allow, for solid Reasoning and Philosophising, these sportive Rovings of a fanciful Brain, we should destroy not only the History of *Genesis*, but all the History in the World besides. We might, by the same Rule, make the Bondage of *Joseph*, or the Children of *Israel*, to be the platonick *Iucarceration* of the Soul, their Descent into *Ægypt* to be their *addo&s;*, and *euyi&s;*; and their Deliverance from thence to be the *mali&yewmnia*; one may turn the Burial of *Sarah* into the philosophick *omua*, or Sepulture of the Soul; and make *Jacob* and the twelve Patriarchs the Sun, and the twelve Signs in the Zodiack. But after this mad Way of Allegorising, we should destroy the Credit of all History; it would make Men perfect Scepticks, as to the Actions of former Times, and make us believe no more of *Alexander* the great, or *William* the Conqueror, than we do of *Atalantis* and *Utopia*.

Moses a plain Writer.

2. *Moses* does every-where shew himself a plain unaffected Writer, and does no-where seem to aim at that reserved Sort of Abstruseness which they of the allegorical Way are pleased with. He every-where relates simple Truths, and those in the most plain and familiar Expressions; he industriously avoids all hard Metaphors, and difficult Terms of Art, such as are to be found in *Aristotle* and *Plato*; he no-where affects to raise a Fame to himself by the Invention of new Notions, as those Philosophers did; but was so far from it, as to deliver down to Posterity his own Failures, 3. *Moses* had not the same Reason to write Hieroglyphically or Allegorically, as other Writers might have; For to begin with the *Ægyptians*, we know that their Priests, who were the great Masters of their Hieroglyphicks, which were called *Hieroglyphicks* or *sacred Sculptures* from them. Now it was their

Business

Business to amuse the People with these dark Riddles, to wrap up common and ordinary Truths in this mystick Dress, that the People might the more admire them; which otherwise they would have despised, had they been delivered in the usual Way, and so the Priests have lost a great Part of their Veneration. But just on the contrary, *Moses* endeavoured to reveal all his Doctrines to the People; he ordered his Books to be read in the Ears of all the People, and commanded Parents to teach them to their Children; so that 'tis plain he did not design, by mystical Senses, to keep them from the Commonalty, but by all imaginable Plainness to suit them to their Capacities.

Again, it was the Design of the Heathen Philosophers, ^{Had no Design like the} who affected Allegories most, to impart their Notions only to their own Scholars, who were let into the Meaning of that philosophical Cant; by which Means they excluded the Vulgar from understanding their Tenets, and kept their Learning within the Bounds of their own School.

But *Moses* had no such Design; he was not afraid of any other Philosophers setting up against him, and running away with his Notions; he had not a School, but a whole Nation to instruct, for the greatest Part consisting of unlearned and ignorant People; and therefore he can never be supposed to make Use of such mystical Doctrines, which were impossible to be understood by the illiterate *Jews*. And lastly, for the *Allegorising Fathers*, they cannot be brought in to countenance this Opinion; for tho' they Allegorise many historical Parts of the Bible, yet they leave the literal Sense entire still; they allow the Matter of Fact was true, but they will have this Matter of Fact to have another allegorical Meaning, and to be a Type of something else. Now the ancient Fathers were

the more inclined to this Way of interpreting Scripture, not only from the Practice of the *Jews* themselves, and the Writers of the New Testament; but to shew the peculiar Excellence of the Christian Religion, against their Adversaries the *Jews*; by making all the History of the *Jewish* Religion, to be only a Type of ours. Now *Mos-*

Nor the same Design with the Allegorical Fathers.

ses having no such Reason to put a mystical Meaning upon his Words, he must be supposed to have used them in the literal Sense ; unless those which the Holy Ghost did design should be also typical, and those Actions which were to prefigure others, under the Kingdom of the Messias.

Phil. I find it grows late, *Credentius* ; and therefore before I take my Leave of you, let me hear what you have to say in Defence of the *Mosaick* Relation of the Fall ; which you promised just now to do.

Cred. The Reason why I so much admire the Excellence of this Relation is, because it gives an easy Solution to many Difficulties in Nature and Morality, which are otherways impossible to be accounted for. *Moses* in a few Lines of this short History, has made many Things plain, which have racked the Brains of many Ages, and which the greatest Philosophers in the World have blundered at.

Moses gives the best Account of the Depravation of Man's Will. 1. The first of these is the natural Account, which he gives of the *Depravation of Man's Will*, or its *Inclination to Evil*. It will amaze one to consider, what horrible Work the Heathen Philosophers made, in their Accounts of it. Some of them made this Inclination to Sin, and all the Evil, which is found in the World, to come from an infinitely-evil Principle ; a Sort of Anti-God eternally co-existing with the good one ; which was not only the Opinion of the *Persian Magi* and the *Manichees*, but, as *Plutarch* says, was the Opinion of the most and wisest of the Philosophers. Now this is such a foolish Account of Sin, that no one will presume to compare the *Mosaical* Account with it : For to assert a God or Principle infinitely evil, is Contradiction in Terms : For as all the Attributes of one God are Good, so the other must be Evil, or just contrary or privative to the first. As one is infinitely *Just* and *Merciful*, so the other must be infinitely *Unrighteous* and *Cruel* ; as the one is infinite in *Power*, so the other must be infinite in *no Power*, that is, must have no Power at all ; as the one is *Eternal* and *Necessary* in his Being, the other must be infinite in *Non-existence*, and be

The Mis-carriages of the Philosophers in this.

impossible to be: All which includes a Troop of Contradictions and Absurdities.

Another Set of Philosophers imputed this Obliquity of the Soul to its Mixture with Matter. But it is unintelligible, how a meer Mixture with Matter, which is neither good nor evil, should make a Thing originally good to be bad. If they say Matter was evil in it self originally; they then make God, which was the Author of Matter, to be the Author of the Evil in it, which is injurious to the Divine Holiness. If they say Matter is eternal, as *Plutarch* and some others of them do, and withal evil in it self; this is to make such another eternal Evil Principle, which includes the Absurdities likewise of the *Manichean* Principle.

A third Sort attributed this Depravation to a pre-existent State of Sinfulness, and that the Inclinableness to Sin in this World was but an ill Habit of the Soul contracted in another, by a voluntary Deviation from God. This the later Philosophers call generally *πλεγύνσις* and *φυγὴ*, the Moultng of the Wings of the Soul, and its Alienation and Flight from the Deity. This last Opinion, I say, the latter Moralists generally took up with, after they had been beat off from their other Accounts by the Arguments of the Christians. Not that they learned this from the *Mosaical* Account of the Lapse, as some will have it, in the School of *Ammonius*; for the *πλεγύνσις* of *Plato* is much older; but afterwards they stuck only to this Account, because the Christians had made the others so apparently ridiculous. But I pray, what Evidence had those Philosophers of such a pre-existent State? They ought solidly to have proved first the State, in which this pretended Lapse happened, before they asserted the Lapse it self; which after all is but their pure Assertion. Besides, these Philosophers generally make this Immersion into gross Matter, to be the Punishment of the Soul for her Offences in her pre-existing State; but then such an Immersion is not a proper Way of Punishment of the Soul, and seems inconsistent with the Wisdom and Justice of God. For all Punishments inflicted by God, especially

ally in probatory States, are in order to Amendment : Now the Soul not having Reminiscence of her former State, it is impossible for her to amend the Errors of that State, she cannot remember. These are the Accounts which the Philosophers give of the *Depravation of the Soul*; which are all very lame and unsatisfactory in themselves, as they are asserted without any Proof. But on the contrary, what can be more natural and easy, than to account for this, by deducing Mankind from one common Stock, which had deviated from its original Rectitude ? That the Soul was strangely degenerated from its original Stamp, was a Thing which all wise Men were sensible of ; but how this came to pass, the Heathens to whom God had not vouchsafed his Revelations, was a Thing they could only guess and blunder at in the Dark. Hence Aristotle compares the State of the Soul in the Body, to the Etruscan Robbers joining dead Bodies to living ones. And Tully talks of the Effects of original Sin more like a Divine than a Philosopher : For thus * St. Austin, in his 4th Book against Julian, brings him in saying, *Non à Matre sed à Novercâ naturâ editum esse hominem in vitam, corpore nudo, fragili & infirmo, animo anxi ad molestias, humili ad timores, molli ad labores, prono ad libidines ; in quo tamen velut obrutus inesset ignis quidam divinus mentis* : That Man was not born of Nature as of a Mother, but as a Step-Mother ; with a Body naked, frail and infirm ; with a Mind anxious for Troubles, dejected for Fears, sluggish to Labour, and prone to Lust ; in which that divine Fire of the Soul lies, as it were, smothered : Upon which St. Austin remarks ; *Non Author iste male viventium moribus dixit effectum, sed naturam potius accusavit ; Rem vidit, causam nescivit. Latebat enim eum, cur esset grave jugum super filios Adam, quia sacrâ literis non eruditus, ignorabat originale peccatum.* “ This “ Author did not speak of the unhappy Effect occasioned by the Disobedience of our first ill-living Parents, “ but only accused Nature. He very well saw the Thing,

* Cic. Lib. 3. de Repub.

“ but

" but was ignorant of the *Cause*. The Reason was hid from him, why so heavy a Yoke was laid upon the Sons of *Adam*; because not being educated in the sacred Letters, he was ignorant of original Sin." If these wise Men had but had the Advantage of reading the *Mosaical Account*, they would never have taken up with such foolish Hypotheses, to explain the Origin of Evil by. They would quickly have concluded, with our Saviour's Argument, that a *corrupt Tree cannot bring forth good Fruit*, Matt. vii. 18. Because this Explication of the Rise of Sin by an original Lapſe is freed from those Absurdities, which the other Explications abound with.

2. Another very good Argument, for the Excellency *His Ac-*
count the
best of the
Pudor cir-
ca res Ve-
neris.

of the *Mosaical Account* of the Fall is, because it gives a *Rationale* of the *Pudor circa res venereas*, which is a Thing which all the Reason of Mankind was never able to do: For how strange is it to consider, what an innate Bashfulness there is implanted in all Mankind as to these Things, and they are looked upon as Monsters in Nature, that can divest themselves of it; and yet to consider, how little natural Reason is to be given for such a Shame? Nay I defy the whole Wit of Mankind, to give any one tolerably satisfactory. For there is no Reason in the World, why Mankind should not use publick Commixtures in a lawful Way as well as eat and drink in publick; or why they should be ashamed of one more than the other: For nothing in Nature is really shameful but Vice. And upon this Account the *Cynick Philosophers* reasoned themselves into such Beasts, as to throw off all Shame of this Nature, and pretended it was only a vulgar Error. But notwithstanding this, the Generality of Men find a mighty Impulse of unaccountable Shame over-ruling them in such Matters, and the most impudent are forced to struggle long with it, before they can conquer it; which no one can give a natural Reason for, but must be beholden to the *Mosaical Relation* to account for it. And from hence all the Difficulty is cleared up; we from hence learn what Irregularities we fall into by the Descent of that original

original Grace forfeited by the first Parents, and from the Predominancy of our animal Nature over our spiritual; and that this Shame is not only a Note of our own Turpitude, but a perpetual Mark and Brand of our shameful Origin from such a degenerate Stock.

*Of the Pain
of Child-
birth.*

3. Another very good Argument for the Excellence of the *Mosaical Relation of the Fall*, is *the Pain of Child-birth*. *Aristotle* in his Book of Animals, long ago observed, that Woman, of all Creatures in the World, was most vexed and tormented in bringing forth. Now what an unaccountable Thing is it, that Woman, which is the principal Female of the whole Creation, should be dealt withal more unkindly by God, than the meanest Creature upon Earth? I defy the wisest Philosopher upon Earth, to give a Reason, why other Females should bring forth with so much Ease, and why God should inflict such intolerable Pain upon Woman alone. To be sure God Almighty did not allot this out of Humour and Caprice, but he had a very good Reason for it: Now never any tolerable Reason was assigned besides that, which *Moses* has given in his Relation of the Fall; and this appears very satisfactory and rational, and therefore is a very good Argument for the Truth and Excellency of this History.

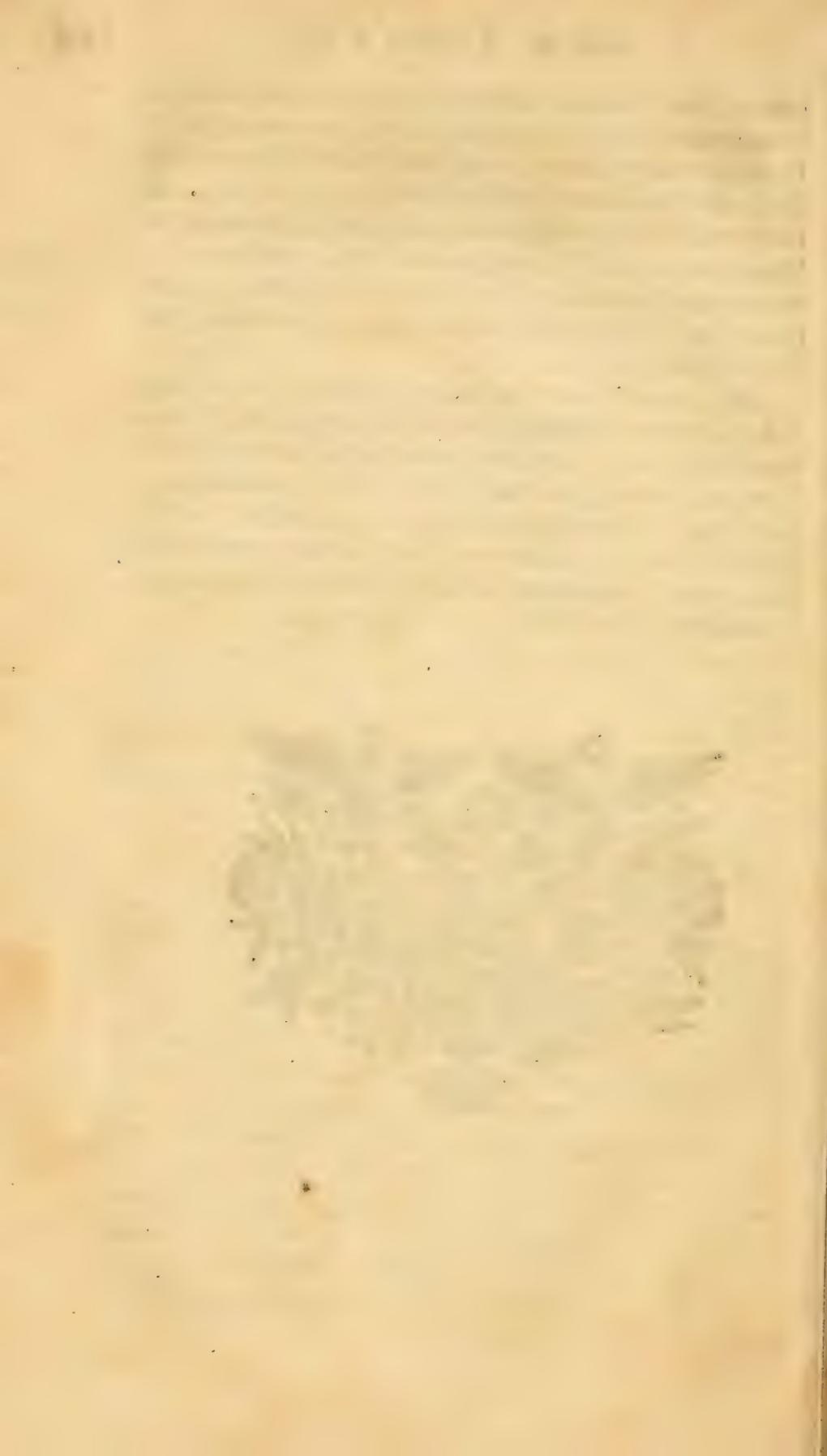
*Of the Bar-
renness of
the Earth.*

4. Another Argument is, the Account *Moses* has given of the modern *Sterility of the Earth*. It has perplexed the greatest Philosophers, to account for this Barrenness; and it has made such Impression upon some, as to make them turn Atheists, and deny Providence. And indeed from natural Light, there is no Reason to be given for it. For indeed it is very surprising to consider, what ungrateful Returns oftentimes the stubborn Ground yields to the Care of the Husbandman; how prolifick it is of its own Accord of noxious and useless Herbs, and how sparingly it produces those we want; what a great Part of the World is uninhabitable Deserts and barren Heaths, that are uncappable of any Tillage, and bring forth hardly any Thing profitable to Mankind. Now this, which has puzzled the Wit of all the Heathen World, is fairly accounted

counted for in *Moses's History*; when he relates this as a Punishment for the Disobedience of our first Parents. I could yet urge farther, in behalf of this History of the Fall, the Slowness of the Education of Children, and their natural Imbecillity above all other Creatures, the Subjection of the Woman to the Man, our Antipathy to viperous Animals, if you can have Patience to hear them; and which can never be accounted for but by the *Mosaick History*.

Phil. You need not bespeak my Patience, Sir, at any Time for your Discourse; but I think by the Arguments you have brought upon this Subject, you have proved it strenuously enough: And the Night draws on, and therefore I must hasten away. My hearty Thanks, Sir, for the Pains you have taken towards converting a poor Infidel; and at your Leisure I will take another Opportunity to be farther Catechised.







A

CONFERENCE WITH A THEIST.

P A R T II.



REDENTIUS thinking himself obliged to return the Visit which *Philologus* had lately given him, after a small Walk of half a Mile, his House lying from *Credentius's*; but at that Distance; he very opportunely hears that *Philologus* was retired to his Study after Dinner, and not suffering the Servant to give him the Disturbance of calling him down, he with his wonted Familiarity, enters upon him there. The Room it self was adorned with all the beautiful Paint and Figures which a skilful Hand could add, and the Books were methodically ranged into various Classes, under the Images of ancient Philosophers

L

and

and Poets, and some other celebrated modern Writers. Nor was there wanting any Greek philosophical, or philological Writer down from *Homer* to *Pletho*; and all the Latin Classicks stood in the exactest Order, and the most curious Binding; and what yet commended them most, they were chiefly of the charming Editions of *Aldus*, the *Stephani*, and *Vascosanus*. Here were all the learned *Adversaria*, Dissertations, &c. of the famous Philologers of this, and the last Age, *Trapezuntius*, *Valla*, *Volateranus*, the *Scaligers* and *Casanbons*; here was a Collection of every Thing curious in the Philosophy of the Moderns up to *Petrarch* and *Mirandula*; all the Wits of our own and the neighbouring Nations, every Thing useful and delicate in the Mathematicks and Poetry, most singular Sets of the modern History, Maps, and Travels; in short, a well-chosen Collection of the most refined and pleasing Authors, which may tend to render the Study of a Gentleman agreeable, and to heighten his Genius. *Philogenus* drawing a Chair for him to sit down, according to his wonted Pleasantness, tells *Credentius*, he was heartily glad to see him; but for Entertainment he must expect the same that he gave him the other Day, endeavouring always to write after so good a Copy as *Credentius*, so that he must expect to be treated only with Discourse: Adding withal, that the Entertainment too of that Nature would be very mean, and be no tolerable Recompence for that instructive Discourse he was pleased to afford him the other Day, which he protested had made him ever since both wiser and better.

Cred. I perceive, Sir, you retain still so much of the complemental Strain, that I have not yet brought you up to the plain Sincerity of that Religion I am Advocate for. And if you find any forcible Conviction in the Arguments I then urged, you must attribute that to the evident Truth of our Religion, and not to my Management.

Phil. I would not have you, Sir, conclude too fast neither, my Head is not so full of Revelation yet, as to swallow the whole Doctrine of the Bible without chewing.

ing. Truly, Sir, I am a Kind of an obstinate Heathen; I shall hold out my Infidelity to the last; and Faith must gain me by Inches, or not at all. You indeed have defended strenuously enough the History of the Creation and the Fall; but this tends no more to make a Man a Christian, than to make him a Jew. I expect to have the Reasonableness of the *New Covenant*, as you call it, made clear to me, and the Mediatorship in all its Particulars. I must demand an Account, why simple natural Religion should not perform as acceptable a Service to God Almighty, as when 'tis cumbered with Jewish and Christian Rites; why God should not as well be pleased with a Man's doing his Duty himself as for the sake of a Mediator; and to what Purpose a Man must be forc'd to believe the Inspiration of a few Books wrote I know not when, and by I know not whom; and which, for the most Part, tell us no more but what natural Religion told us before. Therefore by your Leave, *Credentius*, I will attack you, 1. With the Sufficiency of natural Religion in general towards the Worship of God, and a good Life. 2. In Opposition to the Mediatorship of Christ. 3. In Opposition to the Writings of the Bible.

Of Natural Religion.

And now, *Credentius*, have at you upon the first Head.

I think I need not deduce Arguments for this out of the Depth of Philosophy; for I dare say you will never be able to answer these four Verses of our English Poet.

*Natural Religion, easy, first, and plain,
Riddles made it Fabulous, Priests they made it Gain;
Offerings and Sacrifices next appear'd,
The Priests eat Roast-meat, and the People star'd.*

I protest the cunning Blades had a brave Time of it, when they could fill their Bellies at the People's Charge,

who thought themselves well paid to look on and see them feed. But in the mean Time the poor Folk were miserably besool'd, when they were made to believe, that they rendred the Deity more their Friend, or themselves the better Men by stuffing the Priest's Guts. For what signifies a fat Bullock to God Almighty? But the roguish Priests knew well enough what Use to make of it, when it served them thus to gormandise upon. And truly their Brethren of the holy Tribe have kept up the same Craft and Legerdemain ever since. It is but the same Juggle of the designing Priesthood that upholds all the Superstitions in the World; that maintains both the Pagods of *India*, the Mosques of *Turky*, and provides so comfortable a Maintenance for all the sanctified Gentlemen here in *Europe*. The plain Dictates of Nature are a thousand Times a better Rule of Life than the foolish Rites prescribed by these superstitious Coxcombs; that rook the People of their Money by telling them strange Tales, and exhibiting odd Ceremonies for them to gape at. What, can't a Man live and die as becomes a good Man, without Sacrifices and *Ave-Maries*, and Sacraments and Absolutions? Can't I live as Nature directs, without being plagued and tormented by a Parcel of Creed-contriving, Sin-making Hypocrites? For my Part, I grudge those Harpies every Morsel of Bread they eat; and think that Cheats and Pick-pockets ought to be maintain'd at the Charge of the Nation as well as they. It vexes me to think, that the Generality of People should be such Cullies, to part so easily with so considerable a Part of their Estates, to pay their Priests for Hypocrisy and Lyes; and at the same Time to adore their Holinesses for their Piety and good Service. For my Part, they shall get as little of my Money as ever they can; and I generally tell them their own whenever I meet them. I know two or three of our Neighbours that tamely deliver up their Nose to their Priest's Fingers; and truly you, *Credentius*, suffer them to buzz about you like so many Flies; but you have Sense enough to discover the Fox's Ears through the Sheep's Livery; it is only your good Nature that hinders you from

from doing any Thing unkind to any one ; but for my Part, I make the Sparks know their Distance, I give them no Quarter when ever they fall in my Way ; and that makes them as much scar'd at my Company, as the common People are at their Tales.

Cred. I perceive, *Philologus*, you have a little transported *The Usurper* your self by your own Talk, and have lost your Argument to rally upon the Clergy. But I must needs tell you, that this Custom you have got of exposing the Profession and Persons of the Clergy is one of the worst Qualities I discern in *Philologus*, and is a great Blemish to those other Gentleman-like Accomplishments which adorn his Character. I shall speak to that Simplicity you would have in Religion, by and by ; but in the mean Time, I must beg Leave to speak a Word or two upon this irreligious ill-bred Custom of abusing Clergymen, which has so much obtained among the Gentlemen of this Age. Now this Piece of Ill-breeding was not of our own Growth here in *England* ; it was brought, like the rest of our Follies, from *France*. Our travelling Gentry, who had spent their Time to no Purpose beyond Sea, thought they must bring home something remarkable ; and it was generally that little Banter and Drollery, with which the *French* Gentlemen used to make Sport with their ignorant Friars and *Curees*. All the Improvement it gained in our Nation was more Malice and more Dulness ; for we *English* are generally a grave sober Nation, and nothing looks so awkward in us, and is such a Force upon our Tempers, as Drollery ; so that when once we go to imitate Fools, we generally are such. And indeed we have imitated the *French* in this, but miserably fillily ; for I think there is no Comparison of our Clergy, and the Generality of their Friars, who are commonly very ignorant and silly, and often-times not only lewd themselves, but Panders to other Men's Debauchery. But generally our Clergy live Lives of Virtue and strict Piety, at least few of them are notoriously vicious ; their Education is commonly such as gives them Learning, equal at least to the neighbouring Gentlemen ; and considering the remiss Education of the

Gentry under the late Reigns, for the most Part superior. There is nothing vile and contemptible in their Profession, as there is in some which tend to Vanity or Debauchery, or which do denote some vile Servitude and Drudgery; but their Calling is high and noble, the Subject of it God, and the most sublime and divine Truths; and the End which they drive at, is to make Men good and peaceable. Now there is nothing in all this that should render this Order of Men the Subject of Contempt and Drollery; and Men might, if they please, with as much Advantage, make Sport with Physicians and Lawyers, as they do with Divines. Give me Leave to say, it is an unmerciful Piece of Barbarity to fall foul upon innocent Men, to abuse their Persons and Profession, when there is no Manner of Provocation given them for it; nay, it is most pitiful Cowardice to give such Usage only to those, who, they know, by the Character of their Profession, must not revenge it, which they dare not offer to those whom they suspect may. If such a Man believes the Gospel, he offers one of the greatest Injuries to Religion, by exposing the Ministers of it, and lessening their Credit, whereby they are less able to reform the Lives of wicked Men; and doth withal foolishly give the Lye to his Faith, by ridiculing and affronting the Officers of that holy Institution, which by his Baptism and Communion he has declared the greatest Veneration for. And truly a Man may as well pretend to bear a great Respect to the Government, when he is always exposing and traducing the King and his subordinate Magistrates, as to pretend an Esteem to Christianity, and to be always railing at its Ministers. This is a Practice so shameful among Christians, that would render them an Opprobry to Infidels, in seeing them so disgracing the Dispensers of those Doctrines and Mysteries they hope to be saved by. Nay, to speak more particularly, neither will the known Faults of some, or many Clergy-men, excuse this Custom; because, tho' some are faulty, there are others who conscientiously perform their Duty in all Respects; and therefore to involve all under the same Imputation is shameful Injustice. But besides,

besides, the Faults of a Clergy-man are of so tender a Nature, and are of so nigh a Concern to Christianity, that for the Credit of Religion all good Men will be very cautious of divulging them ; and therefore where-ever we find Men forward to pick up and relate Stories of this Nature, 'tis a certain Sign they are no Friends to the established Religion, and is usually a Sign that they are no good Likers of the common Christianity. And truly, *Philologus*, I must own that the Gentlemen of your Sentiments have taken very proper Methods by vilifying the Clergy to propagate your Opinions, for this one Reason ; because it may easily be observed, that the greatest Number of Atheists and Deists, in this Nation, is made up of such, as have formerly, before they declared for Infidelity, been the greatest Railers against their Parsons. I will not determine whether this comes to pass by the Judgment of God, or the natural Tendency of the Thing ; but this is certain, as far as my Observation can reach, that the chiefeſt of the Body of these Infidels is made out of the Antimonarchical and Rebellious Party of the late Reigns, and the Republicans in this ; Men that are grown sour and peevish at the Miscarriage of their Designs, and exasperated against the Clergy for their Opposition to their Practices ; and so have resolved at last to be revenged upon Religion in Spight to its Ministers. But I'll warrant you by that Smile, *Philologus*, you imagine that the Compliance of the Clergy with the last Reigns, and at last with the present Government, is the true Reason of the Growth of Infidelity now. I shall leave the Gentlemen of that Order to justify their own Actions, who know their own Conscience best. But thus much I will say, that if the Clergy of the Church of *England* had not complied with the Government, we had had, by this Time, such a Medly and Confusion in Religion, as would have made a great many Men have nauseated all. For nothing can be so great a Cause of Infidelity as the unlimited License of fanatical Zeal and Enthusiasm ; and for one Atheist or Deist we have now, we should have had twenty then. And it may be we had been in as bad a Condition, if the Clergy

had not vigorously opposed the rebellious Principles and Practices of those dangerous Phanaticks, and their Abettors, who were going to overthrow a lawful Government, and an orthodox Church. So that I am so far from condemning the Practice of the Clergy of the Church of *England* in these last Reigns, that I highly approve it, both as being very uniform, and of a Piece with its self, and very consonant to Reason and Law. For by the same Reason they comply with this Government which is established by Law ; they refused to comply with the illegal Demands of King *James*, who was acting against Law ; and yet to their utmost opposed the unlawful Seditions, and at last Rebellion of factious People, who were for advancing the Title of a lawless Heir, who had no Pretence to the Crown by any Law in the World, in Opposition to two successive Princes, who had undoubted Right to, and were in actual Possession of it ; and to the Injury of all the lawful Branches of it. So much I have thought fit to say, concerning the Abuses which are frequently given to Clergy-men, by Men that have not cast off all Regard to Christianity, but are willing to lay hold on any Pretence to fall foul upon them, and to wreak their Spleen. But farther, as to Gentlemen of your Persuasion, who look upon our Religion to be a Fable, and think you can have no Tie upon you from that ; yet methinks Civility and common Justice, which you pretend to be the greatest Advocates for, should restrain you from abusing any one, especially those who are used to bespeak you with all Civility and Respect. And as for their Dues which you make a Sport in defrauding them of, you know, by Law, they have as good a Title to them as you have to your Estate ; and your Copy-holders might, with the same Justice, detain your Quit-Rents, as you do their Tithes. And if Religion be only a politick Contrivance of State, if the Law think fit to direct it so ; the Clergy by instructing Men to be virtuous and religious, and by that means keeping Men peaceable at Home, have as good a Plea for the Tenth of our Estates, as the Soldiers have now for the Fifth, for fighting against our Enemies abroad.

I beg

I beg your Pardon for this long Digression from our main Design, which yet your Discourse led me to. And now I shall speak to the Argument of your poetical Friend; which one would think should be irrefragable, considering it is so often repeated by your Gentlemen with such Grace and Emphasis:

The Priests eat Roast-meat, and the People star'd.

But had not the People their Share of Roast-meat too as well as the Priests? Now here is a good Jest spoil'd for lack of understanding the Roman or Greek Antiquities, or for want of reading the Books of *Exodus*, or *Leviticus*. For every Child knows, that the Jews were oblig'd every Year to go to *Jerusalem*, not to see the Priests eat the Paschal Sacrifice, but to eat it themselves. And 'tis plain, that the People eat likewise of other Sacrifices, by *1 Sam. ix. 13.* where 'tis said, *the People will not eat till Samuel come, because he doth bless the Sacrifice.* And nothing of the Jewish Sacrifices were peculiar to the Priests but only the Remainders of the voluntary piacular Offerings, *Lev. vi. 16.* And so in the Heathen Sacrifices, after some small Parts were offered to the Gods, the rest made a Feast for all the Sacrificers together, both Priests and People in common. So *Homer* speaks in general of all present at that Sacrifice;

Aὐτὸς ἐπὶ παύσιν πόνε, τεπ' χοντὸ τε δῖτα,
Δαιρυτ', & δέ τι δύμος ἐδεῦλο δαιτης εῖκος. Hom. Il. i.

'And thus the Labour done, and Dinner drest,
They every one do share a _n equal Feast.'

And so speaking of the Wine in the Sacrifice, which he makes common to all likewise, he says,

— Κεντήσεις ἐπισέλαντο πολοῖο,
Νάδυνταν δ' αἴξι μᾶσιν.—

Crowning the Bowls with Wine,
Which they to all present —

And so *Virgil*, whom *Servius* and *Macrobius* remark to be admirably versed in the sacrificial Rites, speaks of that Sacrifice of *Eneas* in the eighth Book of the *Aeneis*.

Vesci-

*The People
partook of
the ancient
Sacrifices.*

*Vescitur Æneas simul & Trojana juventus
Perpetui tergo bovis, & lustralibus extis.*

'Æneas and his Trojans, all do eat
In order, of the sacrificed Meat.

But farther, *Lylius Geraldus*, in his *Treatise de Diis Gentium*, informs us out of *Herodotus* and others; that the People were so far from not having a Share at the Sacrifice, that they might carry *useidas*, or Cuts of it home with them to their Friends, so that they too might partake of the Sacrifice. Which might perhaps give Occasion to the like Custom of the Christians in the Eucharist. *Euseb. Eccl. Hist. Lib. 5. Cap. 24. 29.* Nay, these voracious Priests were so far from eating up the Sacrifice, that many of the remaining Parts were afterwards sold at the Shambles. *Vid. Herod. Clio. Augustin. Expos. in Rom.* which gave Occasion to those Scruples among the *Corinthians*, concerning Idolatry, which St. Paul so judiciously satisfies, *1 Cor. x. 25. Whatsoever is sold in the Shambles eat, asking no Question for Conscience-sake, &c.* Which Custom the Apostate *Julian* improved so far to be revenged upon the Christians at *Antioch*; as to make all the Food which was brought to Market to be first dedicated at a Heathen Altar. *Theod. Lib. 1. Cap. 14.* And so much for your gormandising Priests.

Phil. Well this is but a small Matter to talk of. But I can never forgive the sanctimonious Brotherhood, for all the Mischief they have done to natural Religion, by burying its pure and divine Light in such a Load of ceremonious Trumpery. If it were not for these Inventions of Priestcraft, a Man might do his Duty as far as Nature directs, with all the Ease imaginable. If a Man would but take Care to do what unprejudiced Nature prompts him to, not to overcharge her with more than she craves, nor to check her in her just Desires, and to have as great and august Thoughts as he can of the Deity; he might perform the whole Business of Religion to all Intents and Purposes.

Purposes. All the ceremonious Foppery which does so pester Mankind, is owing to the Priest's Contrivance, who would not have got so much by the free easy Directions of Nature, as they do by long Catalogues of Articles of Faith, and a fine pageant-like raree-show Worship. For my Money give me good old, pure, natural Religion, which was in *diebus illis.*

In pious Times e'er Priestcraft did begin.

Cred. Which was in *Utopia*, or only in the Brains of the Gentlemen of your Way. For your Notion of natural Religion is so far from being God's Law, or a Rule of Mankind, that it was never dreamt of, till Mr. Hobbs would make his vicious Qualities the Rule of human Actions, and some of his Disciples had improved farther upon him since. 'Tis true, I am for that natural Religion, which is the Dictates of right Reason, as much as any one; but your natural Religion is the corrupt Inclination of a depraved Will and disorderly Passions, made out of Fear, Pride, Lust, and a selfish Humour. Men of these Principles are temperate, only for fear of the Sickness of a Debauch, or in hopes to live as long as the old Gentleman of *Malmesbury*. They forbear to kill, or rob their Friend, for fear of the Animadversion of the Leviathan, or Common-wealth; or that they may not incur the Danger of being hanged, or losing their Reputation. Adultery indeed may be a little against the Pact we enter'd into, when we retired from a State of Nature; but moderate Whoring is as innocent, as eating, drinking, or sleeping. And now what a noble Idea of natural Religion is this, for Men thus to philosophise themselves into Beasts, and to call that pure Nature which is the worst Sort of Brutality? It cannot be denied, but that we have some disorderly Affections within, which are apt to prompt us to such Actions; but we have before shewn, that these Appetites have received an original Depravation, which has been the Opinion of all wise Men; and besides, in the midst of this Tumult of unruly Passions, we still find a right Reason within us, disallowing of these irre-

irregular Tendencies, and a Conscience checking us for the submitting to them. And now let any one judge, which has the justest Claim to the Title of natural Religion, and the unblameable Practice of Mankind ; those wise Dictates of Reason which restrain these Desires, or the mad Passions themselves. And yet when all comes to all, your Infidel Sparks , after all their Cry for natural Religion, and pure uncorrupted Nature, mean no more by it, than uncontrolled Sensuality : Which is so vile an End for a Man to propose to himself, that it reflects a Disgrace upon our common Reason ; and at last, let him gain as much of it as he can, he will never arrive that Way to the Happiness of an ordinary Beast. For a Boar, or a Monkey, can enjoy more of this Sort of Satisfaction, than e'er a Libertine of 'em all. *Epicuri de grege Porci!*

Phil. I beseech you, *Credentius*, not so severe. All we Infidels are not such Hogs as you would make us ; for some of us are better principled than this comes to. Such Men as you describe are our Hereticks, as I may call them : Tho' they pretend to natural Religion, they have highly corrupted it, and almost destroy'd it. But we orthodox Unbelievers have our Tenets fixed upon a sounder Bottom, and take nothing up for natural Religion, which is not the Result of right Reasoning, and grounded upon the clear Principles of natural Light : For this is the sole Rule which God has given us to walk by ; not that Men like these Libertines should mistake the Cravings of their irregular Appetites for the Law of Nature, but to govern them by it. For I suppose God to have given us these Appetites not to be Law to our Actions, but as a *Subject* to exercise our Obedience to this Law of God or Nature upon ; so that then we are said to act according to the Law of Nature, when we follow those Dictates which every one's unbiased Reason affords him, even in Opposition to these irregular Tendencies of our vitiated Appetites. This is that noble Rule which alone, if followed, will make a Man wise, and virtuous, and happy. Under the Influence of this Law alone (till the Priests began their Reign) primitive Mankind liv'd golden Ages ; and

and went to Heaven at last, without Sacrifices and Revelations.

*Hac arte Pollux, hac vagus Hercules
Innixus, arces attigit igneas.*

Cred. I find you are continually harping upon the Priests being the Authors of all the ceremonious Parts of Religion, and particularly Sacrifice ; and that the World was a considerable Time without either Priests or Sacrifice under the Conduct of pure natural Religion, and that the Priesthood was but of late Date, and crept into the World by imposing upon the People pompous Ceremonies. Now to set you right, in this Mistake, will you please to attend to these following Particulars.

1. There was always in the World a Rank of Men who had the Office of the Priesthood annexed to them, whose Office it was to put up Prayers to the Deity for the People, to offer Sacrifices and the like. That this Office was entailed upon Primogeniture, as some maintain from *Numb.* xviii. 16. *Vid. Grot. in Luk.* ii. I think is not so certain ; but that it belonged, and was constantly practised by the Heads of Families, and Princes of Nations in the earliest Times, is unquestionable. So *Noah* after the Deluge sacrificed for himself and Family, *Gen.* viii. 20. The like is recorded of *Abraham*, and *Jacob*, and *Job*. And so among the Gentiles, in the highest Ages, the Crown and Priesthood went together ; of which the History of *Melchizedek King of Salem* is a remarkable Instance in Scripture. And amongst prophane Authors, *Virgil* tells us the like of *Anias King of Delus* ;

Rex Anius, Rex, idem hominum, Phœbique sacerdos.

Virg. Æn. 3.

Upon which Verse *Servius* has this Note : *Sane majorum hac erat consuetudo, ut Rex esset etiam sacerdos, vel Pontifex : Unde hodieque Imperatores Pontifices dicimus.* This was the Custom of the Ancients, that the King must

must be also Priest or Pontifex : And from thence at this Day we stile the Emperors *Pontifices*. And so likewise in his Notes on the 10th of the *Aeneids*, he says *Aeneas* was likewise *sacrorum Rex*, or *Pontifex*. And before him *Priamus the Trojan King* offers the Sacrifice which is described by *Homer. Iliad. 3.* And so not only *Iulus, Aeneas's Son*, succeeded his Father in the Priesthood, but the Priesthood continued for many Ages afterwards at *Rome* in the *Gens Julia*, which descended from him. *Numa* instituted those *Sacra*, called *Regia*, which were to be performed by the Kings only ; ordaining likewise some subordinate Priests, who should supply their Places, when they were engaged in the Wars. So *Julius Cesar*, in Right of his Family, was High-Priest, and after him *Augustus*; and at last the Emperors were *Pontifices Maximi* of Course. So that you see the Priesthood, *Philologus*, is not such a modern Incroachment as you Deists would pretend.

Phil. Let the Invention be early or late, it matters not much, for 'tis so very useless an one that Mankind would not be a Farthing the worse for, if it was quite laid aside ; for it costs us, I am sure, a great Deal of Money, and no Body, that I know, is the better for it. For People may live honestly, and say their Prayers as often as they think fit, without the Help of Parsons : or if they must have Guides, such an honest old Author as *Tully* or *Seneca*, or the good Advice of soime sober wise Gentlemen, will conduct them in the Rules of Morality, without taking Tithes for it.

*The Ad-
vantage of
a Ministry.* *Cred.* The World is very bad as it is, but I believe it would be ten Times worse, if there was not an Order of Men that did continually put People in Mind of their Duty ; and tho' they be very negligent of Instruction, yet by hearing their Duty so continually inculcated, something sticks at last, even in the worst Minds, and keeps them from being so profligately wicked as they would otherways be. 'Tis true indeed, 'tis possible some Men may live good Lives without a Priesthood, or Clergy to instruct them ; and so 'tis possible to blunder out a strange Way.

Way in the dark ; but all Men must allow 'tis more easily gone with an experienced Guide. But besides, I have one Argument to prove the Usefulness of a Priesthood, or Ministry, that will reach you Gentlemen that allow no Revelation. All you Theists grant, that to pray to God is a Part of natural Religion, and that in publick too upon special Occasions, as to deprecate God's Vengeance in publick Calamities, and to thank him for publick Mercies, and the like : Now you would not have all the People at Church to be charming and gabbling together every one his own Prayer, but for Decency and Order sake one ought to speak for the rest ; to whom, if the Publick allow any Thing for his Pains, then you have what we call a Priesthood or Clergy. So that even upon the pure Principles of Deism, this Order is requisite ; and you must destroy your own Hypothesis by making them useless and insignificant. A good and conscientious Clergy-man that makes it his Busines to encourage Piety and Virtue, will do more good than an hundred *Tully's* and *Seneca's* ; and the World would be well hope up, if they had no other Guides in Morality, than some of those wise sober Gentlemen, as you call them ; many of which continue lewd as long as they can, and in their old Age turn Moral-mongers when they can be vicious no longer. But to go on.

2. Neither is your other Supposition true, that there was ever any Age or Nation in the World, when or where such a pure natural Religion as you imagine, without any Manner of rituous Worship, was ever practised. I know not what secret Histories your Gentlemen may have of the Golden Age ; but as for us dull Believers, we can't see one Word in all the ancient Books we meet withal, that gives us the least Hint of such a naked natural Religion as you speak of. If we have Recourse to the Poets, to whom we are beholden for all that is known of these Golden Ages, when these brave Men lived ; they make Religion as Ritual as it is now, and altogether as full of Sacrifices and Revelations. Nay, the Account we have of the Goddess *Aftraa*, which is a principal Part of

of the poetical History of the golden Age, is that she was a *Numen* sent from Heaven to converse with Men on Earth, to *inspire* them with Justice and Sobriety, and to teach them Virtue and a good Life.

Οὐδέποτ' ἀρχαῖσιν ἡνίκαλο φύλα γυναικῶν,
 Ἀλλ' ἀναμιξ ἐνάιστο, καὶ ἀτανάτη περ ἐγένετο
 Ἡ δίκιας γαλέεσσον αἰγεγεγένετο δὲ γένεσθας
 Ήτε τότε εἰς ἀριστήν οὐκέποτε εἴς αἰγαῖς,
 Δημοτέρας ήσαν δημοπρόχειρα δημιουροῦσα. Arat. Phœn.

*Although she did immortal Glories share,
 She freely did converse with Mortals here :
 She taught them Virtue as she walkt the Streets,
 She taught them Counsel in their close Debates :
 From her their Oracle they did derive,
 Laws and the Virtues of a Social Life.*

Which Fable, by the Way, is but an ancient Tradition of the Frequency of God's conversing with holy Men, in the first Ages of the World. Neither did those golden Ages want their Sacrifices more than their Revelations. Nay, if we will believe the Poet *Hesiod*, he tells us the *Golden Age* was particularly remarkable for their Sacrificing to the Gods; and that *Jupiter* was angry with those of the *Silver Age*, and took that Race of Men out of the World for neglecting it.

— εἰδί αἰταντοις δειπνεύειν
 "Ητελον, εἰδί ἔργεσσιν μακρύρων ιεροῖς δημί βωμοῖσι.
 — τὸς μὴ ἔπιπλα
 Ζεὺς Κεραΐδης ἔνευστε χολέμην Θ., ἐνένα τιμαῖς
 Οὐκ ἐδίδειν μακρύρεσσι δειοῖς.— Hesiod. Op. & Dies.

Neither do we see any of the ancient poetical Heroes, your *Hercules's*, and *Pollux's*, your brave natural Religion-Men, but they are as much at Sacrifices as other People. As we see by the Examples of *Priam*, *Ulysses*, and *Achilles*, and *Aeneas* in *Homer* and *Virgil*, of *Cadmus* in *Ovid*,

Ovid, of *Perseus*, *Theseus*, and all the Argonauts in *Apollonius* and other Poets.

And as there was never any Age of the World, in which this superfine natural Religion was universally practised, so neither was there, nor is there, any Part or Nation of it, where it can be found. All the anciently known World, from *India* to *Britain*, from *Africa* to *Scythia*, was all full of Rites and Ceremonies. To begin with our old *Britains* at home : They were so far from professing such a pure natural Religion as you contend for, that they were full of Idolatry, and cruel as well as silly Ceremonies. Their Rites were almost wholly magical, and they were so much wedded to that Art, as *Pliny* says, *Hist. Lib. 30. Cap. 1.* *ut dedisse Persis videri possint*, that they seemed to set a Copy to the *Persians* in it. They adored a Multitude of Idols, *Portenta Diabolica pene numero Aegyptiaca vincentia*, as * *Gildas* calls them, a Company of devilish Monsters, almost exceeding the Number of those in *Agypt*; for besides the *Saxon* Idols of *Tuisco*, *Thor*, *Woden*, *Seater*, &c. they had the Celtick *Teutates* and *Hesus*; and likewise *Belenus* or *Bellatucadrus*, as appears by an ancient Inscription lately found in *Westmoreland*, dedicated *Sancto Deo Bellatucadro*; as also another old God mentioned by † *Sedulius*, (who was a Scotch-Britain) called *Geada*, or *Geta*. And when we farther consider the fond Ceremonies used by their Priests the *Druuids*, in gathering || Oak-branches, and seeking Mistletoe for their Sacrifices, their Cruelty in human Sacrifices, their killing the Victim ‡ upon the Altar with Arrows, or binding him round with Straw, and so burning him alive, with other barbarous and devilish Ceremonies; I say, when we consider all this, we may very well exclude the *Britains* from the Purity of natural Religion. And if we proceed to our old Neighbours the *Gauls*, we shall find them as deep in ritual Worship as the *Britains*: They

* *Gildas de Excid. Brit.*

† *Sedul. in Op. Paschal.*

|| *Plin. Lib. 30. Cap. 1. Plin. Lib. 16. Cap. 43.*

‡ *Vid. Strab. Lib. 4.*

had the same Foppery of the *Druuids* with them, which *Cæsar* * says they borrowed from the *Britains*, and those who would be exact in that Discipline travelled thither. They had the same human Sacrifices, and well nigh the same Gods, as *Lucan* informs us, *Lib. I.*

*Et quibus immittis placatur sanguine diro
Tentates, horrensque feris altaribus Hesus;
Et Taranis Scythica non mitior ara Diana.*

The Spaniards, as † *Macrobius* tells us, worshiped *Sismulachrum Martis radiis ornatum cum maximâ religione*, *Neton* vocantes. They adored an Image of *Mars*, adorned with Rays, with very great Veneration, calling him *Nestos*. They had a Temple with the Rites of || *Apollo Delphinius*; and *Varro*, as *Pliny* ‡ relates, derives *Lusitania* from *Lusus*, the Companion of *Bacchus*, whose Rites were celebrated there. If we look upon the ancient Face of *Germany*, there is as little of pure natural Religion to be found, as any where else, but all is full of idolatrous Ceremony. And *Cæsar* says † they sacrificed to the Sun, *Vulcan* or the Fire, and the Moon; which were the only Gods they saw; but as for others, *ne famâ quidem acceperunt*, they never so much as heard of. But *Tacitus* * and † *Jornandes* make likewise *Mars* their principal God. *Tacitus* mentions their singing Hymns to *Hercules* when they went to War, *De moribus Germ.* and *Paulus Diaconus* speaks of their *Woden*, whom he interprets *Mercury*. To say nothing of the Rites of *Tuisco*, *Friga*, &c. which the *Saxons* afterwards transplanted into *Britain*: If we look Southward into *Africa*, we shall find them there busy with the Rites and Oracles of *Jupiter Hammon*, and with the Worship of an Abundance of their dead Kings ||; and if we look Northward into *Scythia* and *Sarmatia*, we shall find the *Scythians* bloody with the human Sacrifices

* *Cæs. Bell. Gall. Lib. 6.* † *Macrob. Sat. Cap. 19.* || *Strab. Lib. 4.*

‡ *Plin. Lib. 3. Cap. 1.* + *Bell. Gall. Lib. 6.* * *Ann. Lib. 4.*

+ *De rebus Geticis.* || *Tertull. Apo!. Cap. 24.* *Lactant. Lib. 1.*
Cap. 15.

to their *Diana Taurica* or *Scythica*, so renowned of old ; and the *Sarmatians* worshiping in strange Rites one Deity called *Pogwisd*, another *Jeffa*, a third called *Lacton* ; and *Nia*, *Marzana*, and *Zievonia*, Goddesses ; besides two famous Deities named *Zelus* and *Polemus*, which were jointly worshiped like the *Dioscuri*. I need not make any Remarks upon the ceremonious Worships of the *Ægyptians*, *Greeks*, and *Romans* ; for among them I am sure natural Religion was buried under Loads of Ceremonies : There we shall hear of nothing but Temples, and Priests, and Altars ; Expiations, Lustrations, Pomps and Processions ; Images, Hieroglyphicks, Auguries, Plays, and a thousand other Rites, which learned Men have wrote large Volumes to explain. And if we go farther Eastward into *Persia*, and *Syria* ; we shall see the former employed about strange Ceremonies in the worship of the Sun, keeping in the sacred Fires, sacrificing Horses to *Mithras*, with many other Rites which the *Magi* had invented ; and shall find the *Syrians* running after a Troop of different Gods, with as different Worships, *Molech*, *Astartoth*, *Baal*, *Dagon*, *Beelzebub*, *Nisroch*, *Rimmon*, *Nebo* &c. *Vid. Selden de Diis Syris.*

And if you please to look upon the Books of Travels into the *East* and *West-Indies*, you will find altogether as much Ceremony in the Heathen's Worship there : So that I beseech you, *Philologus*, to shew in what Part of the World this natural Religion of yours lay sculking, in this universal Reign of Rites and Ceremonies. And if you cannot, I must conclude, that this Story of the ancient Universality of pure natural Religion is all philosophical Romance, and never had any Being, but in the Brains of the Gentlemen of your Persuasion, and those of some System-makers and Preachers of late, drawn from the scatter'd Sayings and Books of Philosophers, which some have fansied a compleat System of Religion, which alone was owned and practised for some Ages in the World. But I think it is clear from the foregoing Observations, that your Notion of such a *simple natural Religion* was never practised in the World, as far as prophane

History goes ; and as for those that allow the sacred, the Sacrifices of *Cain* and *Abel* will evince ritual Worship to be as old as Mankind it self. Which will be yet clearer when it appears.

*What is
called na-
tural Reli-
gion, was at
first Re-
vealed.*

3. That the common Rules of Morality, or a good Life, which we generally call natural Religion, were at first revealed by God. This may seem a little strange to those who are prepossessed by other Opinions ; but it seems rather more strange to consider, that those moral Notions should come into the Soul by the usual Ways that are generally supposed. It was formerly the current Opinion of the Schools, that these moral Notices were Ideas connate with the Soul, and in a certain Manner inscribed upon it. But it is very odd to think, how such Propositions as these, *Parents are to be honoured, Friends are to be assisted, the Marriage-bed to be undefiled, Whoredom and Drunkenness avoided* ; 'tis odd to think, I say, how these Propositions which are the Complication of so many distinct and simple Ideas, which we are sure are generally attained by Experience and Reason, should yet be asserted to come into the Mind by such an unaccountable Way, as this of Inscription. But seeing no more is meant by this Inscription, than a Kind of natural and universal Inspiration of the Soul or Imbution of it with these moral Principles ; this is altogether unagreeable to the Souls of Children, Ideots, and some very barbarous People, who we are certain do want most of these moral Notions. So that of late this Opinion of *innate Ideas* has been generally exploded by learned Men, and another taken up, it may be subject to as many Difficulties, which attributes the Origin of these moral Notions to the Deductions of right Reason ; asserting, that the Generality of Men having the Use of Reason, and few of them being so brutish, but in their Life-time they apply their Minds to the Consideration of these moral Duties, and so by the Agreeableness of them to the social Life of Mankind, do easily infer the Obligation of them. And so the *Law natural* is by this Explication nothing else, but a Scheme of Virtues and Vices, which every Man, by his

his own Reason and Experience, has found out to be such from their Agreeableness and Disagreeableness to Society, and to the Ends Man is designed for. Thus I am supposed to come to know, that to rob my Neighbour is unlawful, because this is contrary to those * *Principles* of Fidelity we have entered into together, or because this is inconsistent with that mutual † Love and Kindness we ought to bear to our Fellow-creatures ; or because this violates the natural Right which accrues to another by Occupation, || and which cannot be alienated but by Gift, or Sale, or Dereliction. Now there is many a poor honest Indian who knows it is his Duty not to steal, as well as e'er a *Hobbs* or *Puffendorff* of them all ; and yet he never in his Life so much as dreamt of *Parts*, or *Fides Data*, or *Occupation*. Suppose I bargain with an honest *Virginian* for a Pipe of Tobacco, and a Bottle of Sack, to watch my Tent, whilst I sleep, from wild Beasts or Banditti's : now when he might cut my Throat, and run away with all that I have ; what is the Reason that the poor Fellow stays walking about as trustfully with his Bow and Arrow, as if he were set Centinel by a Captain that would hang him for running away ? Why, say most of our Natural-religion Men, by frequent Exercise of his Reason and Thinking, he has come to the Knowledge of the Horridness of the Sin of Murther, and the Baseness of Unfaithfulness. But then who can ever think, that this poor ignorant Wretch should ever have given himself to such grave and philosophick Disquisitions ? that he should ever have considered, that to kill a rational Creature, was to deface the Image of the All-wise Deity, to usurp a barbarous Power over one naturally equal with himself, and to take away that Life which mutual Friendship obliged him to protect ; that to violate a given Faith was a Baseness beneath the Dignity of a rational Man, and which, if universally practised, would destroy all Society out of the World. No certainly, the

* Vid. *Hobb's Leviathan*. † *Parker's Law of Nature*. || *Pufendorff de Jur. Nat. & Gentium*.

poor Indian never troubled his Head with these Matters ; his Thoughts in his younger Days ran all upon Hunting, and Swimming, and Loving, and afterwards to get good Store of Prog for his Wives and Children ; but he never thought a Word of these Rationales of Morality, which were invented by Men of a learned Education and busy Thoughts. How came then this poor Fellow to the Knowledge of these moral Duties ? Why truly, I can conceive no other Way than by Tradition ; his Father taught them him, and his Grand-father his Father, and so up to *Adam*, the common Parent of us all ; who had them first from God Almighty, as the universal Laws, that all his Posterity should be governed by. Nor is it any Objection against this Opinion, that Tradition does not seem to some so proper a Means to convey Morality by to Mankind, because of its Liableness to Corruption ; and that it would have been more sensibly vitiated than we find it is, had it descended by this Method : For tho' Relations of Matters of Fact, ancient Customs, and difficult Articles of Faith, may suffer much by being conveyed this Way ; because the Understandings of Men cannot be supposed to have a clear Understanding of these Things upon the first Proposal, and so may be liable to mistake them, which must occasion very great Alterations in such a Number of Deliveries ; but these plain Rules of Morality, such as *worship God, honour thy Parents, thou shalt do no Murther, thou shalt not steal, &c.* are so natural to the Understanding, so easy to be embraced by it, and appear upon Proposal to be so extremely useful to Mankind, that they must be assented to, and can never be mistaken or forgot. The same is the Case of these moral Rules, as of very early and useful Inventions, such as Spinning, Weaving, Arching, &c. which are conveyed to all the World, not by being written in Books, or in Men's Hearts, but by the handing down from one to another for several thousand Years together. Now unless it was the general Opinion of Mankind, that this was the ordinary Way of conveying the Rules of Morality to their Posterity ; to what Purpose should they take so much

much Pains in instructing their Children, as we find Men have done in all Ages, and in all Countries? But if Morality were inscribed on Men's Hearts, and so were all one as if it were implanted in their Nature; Parents might with as much Wisdom pretend to teach their Children to eat and drink, to love their Children, and desire a Propagation of their Species, which they cannot but do; or if these moral Duties were the necessary and unavoidable Deductions of Reason, it would be as simple to go about to learn them the Rules of Virtue, as to teach them that one and one make two. And it is farther particularly remarkable, and which may serve as a good Proof of what has been said, we find that Parents are commanded by God, *Deut. vi. 6.* to teach their Children these moral Duties. For after the recital of the ten Commandments, (*viz.* the moral Law,) He adds, *And these Words which I command thee this Day shall be in thy Heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy Children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy House, and when thou walkest by the Way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.* And 'tis yet farther remarkable, that what *Moses* here says, *shall be in the Jews Hearts,* the Apostle says, *Rom. ii. 15.* was written in the Gentiles Hearts; So that unless there can be a substantial Difference evinced between *being in the Heart, and being written* there, all the Doctrine of inscribed Propositions falls to the ground. And I am sure there is no Reason why God should write moral Laws in the gross and literal Sense in the Gentiles Hearts, and put them into the Jews by the ordinary Way of Teaching and Instruction.

4. But in the fourth place, *Philologus*, you are something mistaken in asserting that it was the ancient Riddles, when Men affected to deliver sacred Truths in the ænigmatical Way, that first debauched natural Religion, by introducing all the Fabulosity of the Heathen Polytheism. This is a Position, which is asserted very confidently by some, who I believe are better Friends to Religion than you, but I think without just Ground, for whatever I could see,

*Riddles not
the Corruption
of natural Reli-
gion.*

Phil. I beseech you, Sir, don't go to run down the Grounds we build our Assertion upon, without understanding what they are. For there is a great Deal of Reason to believe, that the ænigmatical Way of explaining the Nature and Providence of the Deity, gave Occasion to the Heathen Polytheism, and serves very much to apologise for it. For I look upon the Heathen *Zēs*, or *Jupiter*, with the learned Ancients *, to be but the *Aether*, or that fluid agitated Part of the Universe, which permeates the Pores of all Bodies, and is the Cause of all Motion, Generation, Fermentation, &c. and therefore is well called *Jupiter, quasi juvans pater*. The Goddess *Juno* †, or *Hēn* (i. e.) *quasi aēsē*, is the Air, which warmed, or agitated by the *Aether*, is a principal Cause of the Procreation of Animals and Vegetables, and was for that Reason worshiped as the Goddess of Childbirths. || *Saturnus quasi satur annis*, or *Kēros*, is said to be the Father of *Jupiter*, because before the World was, *Time* was. He is said to dethrone his Father because the Creation of the World put a Period to that long unmeasured Duration. *Ceres quasi Geres à gerendo*, the Goddess of Corn, or *anūnīng qu. Tānūnīne*, or Mother-Earth, is only the Ground, as *Nepīnūnus*, the Sea, or the same Deity exercising his Providence in all ; or to use St. *Austin's* Words, who expresses the Meaning of the Ancients well, thus : *Ipse in aethere est Jupiter, ipse in aere Juno, in mari Neptunus, in inferioribus etiam maris ipse Salacia, in terra Pluto, in terrā inferiore Proserpina, in focis domesticis Vesta, in fabrorum fornace Vulcanus, in syderibus Sol, Luna, & Stella. In divinanibus Apollo, in merce Aēcurius, in Faro Initiator, in termino Terminator, Saturnus in Tempore, Mars & Bellona in Bellis, Liber in vineis, Ceres in frumentis, Diana in sylvis, Minerva in ingenis, &c.* So that all the ancient Theology and Theogony is only an Account of the divine Attributes and Providence in an ænigma-

* Cic. de Nat. Deor. Lib. 3. Plat. in Timæo. Sallust. de Diis & Mard. Cap. 6. + Cic. ib. Plato in Cratyl. || Cic. ib. Nat. Com. Myth. Lib. 2. Cap. 2. Aug. Civ. Dei, Lib. 7. Cap. 19. § Civ. Dei. Lib. 4. Cap. 11. Vid. De hac re Var. De Ling. Lat. Lib. 4.

tical and mythological Manner ; and it was only owing to the mean Capacities of the Vulgar, that they blundered into Polytheism by it : Just as it when the Scripture mentions Wisdom and Religion in the Notion of a Person, *Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantry, &c.* an ignorant Christian should take her for a Goddess, and as when St. Paul preached ~~in the year 200~~, Jesus and the Resurrection, the Greeks took him for a setter forth of strange Gods, Act. xvii. 18. an Introducer of a new God and Goddess, which the *Athenians* in all their Theogony had never heard of. So that at last there was but the same Deity under *Varro*'s three thousand Names, and the same supreme *Jupiter* was not more distinct under all these, than when he was called *Εόσιος, Εέριος, ἀπομνίος*, or *Jupiter Capitolinus*, or *Stator*. And this I think is a fair Account of the Rise of the Heathen Polytheism, and the many superstitious Rites which crept into natural Religion upon it.

Cred. I confess, *Philologus*, you are not mistaken, that Heathen Polytheism
not the diverse Exhibitions of Providence. many of the ancient Philosophers have given this Account of the Rise of the Heathen Idolatry which you do ; but then I very much question the Truth of their Assertion, and the Validity of their Arguments, and I think there are other and better Reasons to be given of the Origin of it. Nor is the Opinion of the Philosophers much to be relied upon ; for they lived long after Polytheism was introduced, and knew as little of its Origin as we do ; and besides, they had an Interest to serve, which was to represent the Folly of the Heathen Polytheism as favourably as they could to Men of Sense ; they were (if I may so say) the Condoms of Paganism, to qualify it, the better to go down with Men of Thought and Enquiry. Neither is there any Thing in it, for ought I see, but a little Wit and Fancy, of which *Plato*, who (I think) was the Author of it, had enough. For *Socrates* having suffered for an Unitarian, and deriding the Gentile Multitude of Gods, *Plato* had a Mind to trim the Matter, by this Kind of Reconciliation, which you have mentioned in his Dialogues *Timaeus* and *Cratylus*. And what

what I pray are all these fine Derivations of the Names of these Deities (which are the principal Part of the Argument) but mere sportive Rovings of Fancy, and as splenetick as making Men and Chariots in the Clouds? I would undertake, as easily to make these principal Deities to be the four Quarters of the Year, as you have made them the chief Parts of the World; and I think with as much Veri-similitude. Let *Juno* be the *Spring*, and the Greek "Ἥρη" is nigher ^sἭρη than ^aἌήρ the *Air*. Let *Zeus* be the fervid hot *Summer*, *Pluto* the rich *Autumn*, and *Neptune* (or if you will *Saturn*) the cold watery *Winter*. Now if this had come from an *old Beard*, and a *Pallium*, and had had but the Prescription of two thousand Years, it would have been lookt upon, perhaps, by many of your Gentlemen, as a rare Comment upon the Heathen Theology. But after all, these fabulous Stories of the Gods are uncapable of allegorising, or having any tolerable mystical Sense put upon them. For what other Sense besides the literal Meaning can be put upon the Rapes and Whoredoms of *Jupiter*, and the other Gods? What mystical Meaning can be put upon *Jupiter's* Rape of *Europa*, in the Shape of a Bull, or *Danae* in a golden Shower? Indeed so far the Story may be unriddled, that *Jupiter* who committed this Wickedness was a *Gracian* Prince named *Taurus*, as * *Palæphatus* contends, or in a Ship called the *Bull* as others: That the golden Shower by which he corrupted *Danae* was by giving her Money, or by bribing her Keepers. But after all, the Story is a lewd Story still, and which cannot without Horror be heard to be attributed to the supreme God of Heaven and Earth. And what good Sense can be put upon those yet lewder Amours of *Jupiter* and his Boy *Ganymede*, *Apollo* and *Hyacinthus*, *Hercules* and *Hydas*? Indeed *Plato* in his *Dialogue de Pulchro*, seems as if he had a Mind to interpret this infamous Familiarity of *Jupiter* with *Ganymede* into his platonick Love; but in my Mind that very Dialogue lacks Apology its self; for

* *Palæph. de Incred. de Europâ.*

a Man finds there so much of the ἐρῶν and the ἴσωμενος, the *Amator* and *Amasius*, with such odd Allusions to that execrable Vice, that one had need of very virtuous Thoughts, and a very charitable Mind to allegorise all the strange Metaphors of that Discourse into a chaste Meaning. A Man would be hardly put to it, to moralise and unriddle all the poetical Banter about *Jupiter*, and *Mars*, and *Venus*, and *Bacchus*, &c, and at the same Time take them for Gods, or only particular Energies of the divine Providence. For what can one make, besides some fanciful Remarks, of *Saturn*'s devouring his Children ; of *Jupiter*'s castigating his Father ; of *Rhea* the old Beldam Goddess, her being in Love with *Atys*, a young Boy ; of the Adultery of *Mars* and *Venus* ; of the *Titan*'s Wars, and *Vulcan*'s celestial Forge ? Now who can ever imagine, that all this horrid, lewd, and simple Stuff, was ever designed for practical Divinity, and to teach Morality to Mankind by representing their Gods so mean, so foolish, and so debauched ? It remains therefore, that some other Account must be given of the Heathen Mythology, than that of ancient Riddles, and Theology, and Morality's being delivered under those Umbrages.

Therefore, I suppose, that the Heathen Idolatry and mythological Divinity was owing to the illiterate Darkness of some Ages, which succeeded after the Flood. * *Varro* does very well divide Time (at least as far as 'twas known to the Heathens) into the "Ἄσταον, or that obscure Time which was from the beginning of Things to the first Cataclysm (i. e.) *Ogyges*'s Flood ; the second was the μυδινὸν reaching from the first Cataclysm to the first *Olympiad*, called fabulous, because all the poetical History was transacted in it ; and ever since has been the ἴσογικὸν, or Time of History, when a true Account of Matters of Fact hath been given us. Now the Reason why there was no certain Account of these two former Stages of Time, was the Want of the Invention of Writing, or at least the general Use of it. So that all the

*Caused by
the Dark-
ness of the
Postdiluvia-
an Ages.*

* In Censorin. de Die Nat. Cap. 21.

Accounts of former Times could only be deduced and carried down by Tradition ; and what sad Work this would make in History and Theology, every one knows. The People of the several Nations had some general Notions of the Deity ; they had heard of Gods freely conversing with the Patriarchs after the Flood, of the Ministry of Angels, &c. and this they jumbled together with the Stories of their Kings, like a Piece of *Turkish Chronology*. Their Kings, according to the usual Flattery of those Ages, were made Gods ; and then the common People who never stood upon the Decency of the Character, ascribed to them all the Actions and Infirmities which belonged to their Manhood, after they were Gods. When they told a Story of former Times in a barbarous Age, it was hardly worth hearing, unless there was something strange and prodigious in it ; and it was safe making it as wonderful as one pleased, because there was no standing History to contradict it. From hence no doubt it must come to pass that all our monkish Stories and Romances must be out-done, as the Barbarity of those first Times was greater ; so that all the Stories of *Jupiter*, and the *Centimani*, and *Pelion* and *Offa*, *Bacchus* and *Theseus*, *Andromede* and *Medea*, &c. were but the first Edition of Giants, enchanted Castles, Knight-Errants and King's Daughters. Therefore it grieves me to see learned Men (Christians especially) abusing their Time and Letters, to fish out philosophical Reasons for all these lying Fooleries.

*By deifying
of Princes.* 2. It was in great Measure owing to the deifying of Princes. For most of those Gods which were worshiped by the old Heathens, were Kings formerly of the Country where they were adored. It is agreed by all, that the great *Affyrian Belus* was either *Nimrod*, or some other great Prince of that Country : And * *Diodorus Siculus* relates the same of the *Ægyptian Horus*, and *Osiris*. The Greek *Zevs*, or *Jupiter*, was King of *Crete*, at least he that was commonly worshiped ; as *Tully* himself is forced to

* Hist. Stabul. Lib. 1.

own, * though he be so great an Advocate for the natural Deities. *Saturnus*, *Janus*, *Fannus*, *Fatua*, *Romulus*, and all the *Dii indigites*, are generally owned to be Princes of *Italy*; and the Latin *Jupiter* might probably be *Aeneas*, who was called *Jupiter Indiges*. Neither doth he receive his Name à *juvando*, as being so principal a Part of the Universe, as *Varro*, and *Tully* pretend; but is only the Greek Ζεύς, with the usual Addition of *Pater*, as *Mars-piter*, *Deispiter*, it being usual to change the Greek Ζ when put in Latin into *Z* or *G*, which has the like Sound, as ΖΥΡΟjugum, ΖΥΓΕΙοGingiber. And as for *Juno*, I look upon her to be but the old *Jana*; and *Saturn* to be the true Name of that old King, which is preserved still in the Teutonick, *Seater*. So was the famous *Hammon* of *Africa* *Cham* the first Prince, or Founder of that Country, *Bacchus* a great Conqueror in the East, and the celebrated *Rhea*, or *Cybele*, an adopted Daughter of *Minos*, an ancient King of *Phrygia*, and *Ceres*, or *Isis*, a Queen of *Ægypt*. There is no Doubt, but these Deities were first taken in as ascititious and tutelar Gods of the Place, and worshiped together with the supreme God, but in Time, like Saint-worship among the *Papists*, they justled out God Almighty through Pretence of their particular Inspection, and brought his Worship to little or nothing. And besides People stood upon Punctilio's of Honour, to have their particular God the greatest God; so that there was not any little Hedge-God of a puny Province, but by his Votaries was equalled to the Gods of the King of *Affyria*. Hence Zeal for their Deities, and a fanciful Bigottry, sounded abroad a Number of their Miracles and Excellencies, which coming to the Ears of foreign Countries, they in Time of Extremity, when they were willing to try all Experiments, adopted them their Gods too; as the † *Mater Idaea* was brought to *Rome* when *Hannibal* with his Army was ravaging *Italy*, and ‡ *Æsculapius* was canonised there in that raging Pestilence which happened, *An. U. C. 460*. So that in Time

* *De Nat. Deor.* Lib. 3. † *Liv. Hist. Lib. 39. c. 10.* ‡ *Id. Lib. 10.*
this

this translating of Deities from one Country to another did very much conduce to the Increase of the Heathen Polytheism and fabulous Stories of their Gods.

By the worship of the Sun, Moon and Stars.

3. Another great Cause of it was the early and almost universal Worship of the Sun, Moon, and Stars. It is certain, that the Idolatry of the Sun and Moon is very ancient, by the Book of *Job*, which probably is the oldest Writing extant; for *Job* there maintaining his Integrity, disowns his ever having worshiped the Sun or Moon: *If I beheld the Sun when it shined, or the Moon walking in Brightness, and my Heart hath been secretly enticed, or my Mouth has kissed my Hand; this were also an Iniquity to be punished by the Judge, for I should have denied the God that is above.* Job xxxi. 26, &c. And *Macrobius* spends seven whole Chapters in his first Book of *Saturnalia*, to prove, that *Apollo*, *Mars*, *Mercury*, *Æsculapius*, *Salus*, *Hercules*, *Iris*, *Serapis*, *Adonis*, *Atys*, *Osyris*, *Horus*, *Nemesis*, *Pan*, and even *Saturn* and *Jupiter*, were nothing else but the Sun. And if one considers the Gloriousness of that Planet, and its extraordinary Beneficialness to the Earth, one can hardly imagine, but that the first Idolaters paid their Worship to it. 'Tis plain by History, that the *Persian Mithras* was but another Name for the Sun. And learned Men have proved, that the Moabitish *Baal-Peor*, the Syrian *Moloch*, the Arabian *Urotalt*, the *Æthiopian Assabinus*, and other Deities, were nothing else but the Sun. *V. Vossium de Orig. Idol. Spenc. de Leg. Heb. Selden, de Diis Syris.* That *Hecate* and *Diana* were but other Names for the Moon, is known to every one; and, *Orpheus* in his Hymns makes her *Proserpina* too.

"Ωρῶν συμπλέκτεια, φωεσφόρε, ἀγλαέμορφε
Ἐνθεγγέες, κερέσσα —

*Spinster of Time, of bright and beauteous Form;
O shining, horned Goddess.*

The same was in Probability the *Ægyptian Isis*, the *Assyrian Astarte*, or *Astaroth*, the Arabian *Alilat*, and the Greek *Ilithyia*. The other Planets gave Names to some Gods, as to *Mars*, *Mercury*, *Venus* or *Dione*, as the fanciful Forms of the Constellations might do to others, as to *Hercules* and *Orion*; and when all these different Names, which were given the same Luminaries in so many several Countries, came to be carried to *Greece* and *Rome*, who understood nothing of these barbarous Languages, they presently took them for new Deities ~~of~~ ξενιοι, outlandish Gods, which they had never worshiped before; so that this alone must in Time swell their List of Deities to a considerable Length.

4. Another Cause of their Polytheism and fabulous Divinity, was their making Gods and Goddesses of Words, a Sort of grammatical Deities, that were made Gods when of the Masculine, and Goddesses when of the feminine Gender. Thus *Somnus*, and *Dolor* and *Pavor*, were He Gods; and *Pecunia*, *Prudentia*, and *Concordia*, were She ones, with a World more of the like. Now when the Heathen had gotten this Way of stocking Heaven, 'tis a Mercy they had not left us the whole Dictionary full of Gods. And just at the same Rate the Nurfes and good Women were the Authors of a Multitude of Deities. It was they that invented the Office of *Lucina* to give an easy Labour, of *Opis* to receive the Child; of the God * *Vagicannus*, that opened the Mouth of the Child to cry; of *Levana*, that took the Child up when 'twas down; of *Cunina* which guarded the Cradle, of the *Carmentes* which read the Destiny of it, of *Rumina* which made it suck, *Educe* and *Potina*, which made it eat and drink; of *Menas*, *Fortuna Barbata*, *Juguntinus*, &c. Now I fancy, *Philologus*, I should make you break your Brains, should I set you to give a philosophical Account of all those Deities, when an old Woman could coin twenty of them in a Breath.

Phil. I thank you, Sir, for your kind offer; but I don't Care to be set to such Sort of Work as the Conjurers do

* Vid. Var. Ling. Lat. Lib. 4. August. Civ. Dei, Lib. 4. Cap. 11. the

the Devils they raise, to pick Oatmeal and tell Sand. But although some silly People might make odd Sort of Work with natural Religion heretofore ; yet as it was taught and practised by the wisest of the Heathen, it was a noble Religion, full of wise Thought and rational Deduction ; the Dictates whereof were not proved by Chapter and Verse, but by solid and curious Reasoning. And this your Divines are aware of well enough, when they are forced now and then to bring in a Shred or two of the ancient Learning, to add a Poignancy to their dull Discourses of Morality, to keep the Folks from sleeping : And I observe generally an Auditory on a sudden to look brisk upon *Plato* and *Tully*, when they have been nodding over *Paul* and *Peter*. And truly there is good Reason for it ; for their Books and Sayings afford us such admirable Lectures of Morality ; in them we may see the Duty of Mankind set out so fully and exactly, and in such charming Strains of Eloquence, that all your inspired Authors, as you call them, look very poor Things to them. Now who can blame me for standing up for natural Religion, when you see it could raise these philosophical Minds to such a noble Height, as Revelation can never pretend to ? I cannot read a Piece of *Seneca*, or *Plutarch*, or any of those excellent Philosophers, but methinks, my Soul is warm'd with the Braveness of the Thoughts, and I am at the same Time convinced of, and in Love with my Duty. And I doubt not, but had I liv'd in those Times to have made the Observation, I might have perceived, that the Lectures and Examples of these admirable Men had considerable Influence upon the Lives of the common People ; at least, I am sure, there was Force enough in their Doctrine to make them completely good. *Sit anima mea cum animis Philosophorum* ; and in another State, let me but consort with the *Plato*'s and *Zeno*'s, and I shall never envy your Armies of Saints and Martyrs.

Cred. I will be kinder to you than you are to your self ; and will put up my Prayers to God, that you may have a place in the Resurrection of the Just, and may be of the Number of God's Elect, and then I am sure you are safe.

It shall not be my Business to predetermine the future State of those good Heathens, that have lived up to the Light of their Reason. I know they are to stand or fall by the Judgment of a merciful God; and therefore for my Part I am always inclined to hope very well of them. But this I am sure of, that the Morality of the Heathen Philosophers was so far from being a compleat Rule of Morals, that it was very erroneous, both as it represented the Nature of God and the Notion of Virtue; and that it was so far from having any Influence upon the Lives of the Commonalty, that for the most Part it had little or none upon their own. As for their good Language and handsome Thought, that was the Talent and peculiar Study of those Ages; but then again, that which fullied all their Performances, and spoil'd the best Things they did, or said, was, that Pride and Vain-glory, which was common to all of them, and which all their Words and Actions were bottomed upon. For I will make it appear to you, *Philologus,*

i. That Pride and Vain-glory was the *Primum Mobile*, *Morality of the first Spring of the Morality of the old Philosophers,* and not a Design of doing Good. Now such a pitiful End, as this is, is enough to spoil the best Action in the ^{sophers grounded upon Pride.} World. *Tertullian*, * I remember, calls a Philosopher *the Animal of Glory*; and if one considers the Generality of their Writings and Practice, one shall find he had great Reason for it. And *Cicero* is so ingenuous as to own the Charge, though against himself: For he tells us sincerely, † *Vult plane virtus honorem, nec est virtutis ulla alia merces.* Virtue does plainly desire Honour, neither has she any other Reward. And if a Man scans the whole Tenor of the Philosopher's Lives, he can never think they had any other End. For what other Account besides gaining Glory, and a Name in the World, can be given of their Hatching so many different Principles, both in Physiology and Morality, but only to be taken Notice of for inventing something singular and remarkable? What was

* Lib. de Animâ † Cic. de Amiciss.

it but this vain Ambition, that put them upon such affected Habits, which many of them are reported to have worn, upon such singular Diet and odd Actions, which the Writers of their Lives relate of them? If they had design'd to do as much good as they could by their Philosophy, they would have communicated it to all; but instead of this, they taught it only to a select Number of Men that were their own Disciples; and this oftentimes under an Engagement of Secrecy, or in a Way of Cant, which was unintelligible to all others. So that all these noble Rules of Morality, which would have made the World so happy, were confined to a few Gentlemen only, that could afford Time and Money to get such philosophical Tutors; but for the rest of the World, for all the Philosophers, they must be content to live like Beasts still.

The ancient Philosophers mistaken in the Nature of God.

2. The Doctrine which was taught by the Generality of the Heathen Philosophers, was injurious to the Nature and Attributes of God. Now to conceive wrong Notions of God's Nature, will perfectly poison Men's Morality; for Men must needs suit their Actions so as to be agreeable and acceptable to the Deity they worship. So that if Men fancy God an impure, sensual or careless Being, there is, no doubt, but their Lives will be of the same Piece. Therefore the erroneous Opinions of the Heathen Philosophers concerning the Deity, were not pardonable Blunders, as many others in their Physiology were, but such Mistakes as were of fatal Consequence to the Virtuousness of their own and Followers Lives. And what a World of Mistakes shall we find them subject to of this Kind? Some of them were downright *Atheists*, and believed no God at all, as * *Diagoras Melius*, *Theodorus*, and *Critias Atheniensis*. The Spirituality of God was denied by *Epicurus* †, who was an Anthropomorphite, simply presuming that God was of the Figure of a Man; and by *Zenophanes*, who made him *σφαῖρα ἀνάστης*, a great impassable Sphere or Globe of Matter. So *Parmenides*

* *Sext. Emp. Hypot. Lib. 3. Cap. 24.*

† *Ib. ib.*

Eliates

*Eliates** would have the Deity to be Fire and Earth, and *Hippasus Metapontinus*, and *Heraclitus*, the Fire only which *Justin Martyr* † relates of *Plato* likewise. The Unity of the Deity || was Universally denied by them all, and they owned either the Gods of the Country, or the Parts of the World to be such ; and tho' it was charged against *Socrates* in his Trial, that he disowned his Country-Gods, and their Worship ; yet at his Death he discovers himself to be down-right Pagan, and orders his Executors to Sacrifice the Cock ‡ he had vowed to *Aesculapius*. And as for *Plutarch* §, one of the soberest of the Philosophers, he was the horridest Polytheist of them all ; for he asserts two supreme Anti-Gods, one infinitely good, and the other infinitely wicked, which of all Errors is the most monstrous and abominably absurd. The *Infinity* of God was denied by all those that asserted an infinite Number of Worlds *, as *Anaximander*, *Anaximenes*, *Archelaus*, *Diongenes*, *Leucippus*, *Democritus*, and *Epicurus* ; and by the Stoicks, who generally made him the *Anima Mundi* : For two actual Infinites are impossible ; and if the World be infinite, God is not. And as for the *Anima Mundi*, they made that only a subtle corporeal Flame, permeating the whole World, and so must be terminated at the Bounds of it, and consequently finite. The *Freedom* of the *divine Will* was destroyed by the Fatality of the Stoicks ; and so was God's *Omnipotence* fetter'd by the stubborn Laws of their unalterable Fate. As for God's *Providence*, that was perfectly excluded the World by *Epicurus*, and not allow'd by *Aristotle* † on this Side the celestial Spheres. Thus you have seen, how these great Oracles of Reason, and brave Natural-Religion-Men have been mistaken, even in the common Notions of the Deity. Let us see now, whether they are not,

* Clem. Alex. Protrept.

† Τὸν ἀνθεῖτον θεόν εἰ τὴ πυρός θεός εἴη. Cohort ad Græcos.

|| See Onatus the Pythagorean's Arguments for Plurality of Gols; Stob. Ecl. Phys. Lib. i.

‡ Plat. Phædo. § Plutarch.

* Stob. Ecl. Phys. Cap. de Ort. & Inter;

† Id. Ec. Phys. Cap. 25.

*E*rroneous
in their
Moral Do-
ctrines.

3. *Mistaken in their Opinions concerning Virtue and Vice.*
 I should make a Day of it, should I recite all the silly and the wicked Opinions which occur in the Writings and Lives of the Philosophers : I shall only mention some few of them ; to put you in Mind, that these old Sages are not such excellent Masters in Morality as your Theistical Gentlemen would pretend, and that their Reason is no such infallible Guide in natural Religion as you would have it. And now what shall we think of the little puny Philosophers, when the great *Plato* * himself was an Advocate for the Community of Goods, which would perfectly destroy all Industry and Peace in a Commonwealth ; and what is yet worse, when he contends for the common Use of one another's Wives ? The famous *Zeno* †, the Founder of the Stoical Sect, with his Followers after him, made all Sins equal, and that it was as great a Sin to steal a Pin, as to kill one's Father ; and *Sextus Empiricus* || quotes out of him a Passage, wherein he would prove, that it is as lawful to lie with one's Mother, as to stroak her Arm ; he likewise brings in the same *Zeno* with the celebrated Stoicks *Cleanthes* and *Chrysippus* ‡, as making that execrable Crime of masculine Venery a Thing indifferent. And *Diogenes Laertius* § in his Life lays it down as one of his Principles, to be *merciful to no one*, and to *pardon no body*. And *Theophilus Antiochenus* * brings in *him* and *Cleanthes*, as asserting that Sons and Daughters might as lawfully roast and eat their Parents Flesh as other Food. He asserted that his μεγαλοφυχία, or Greatness of Soul, which was nothing else but a Stoical Pride, was sufficient for Happiness ; but his Scholars, † *Panaetius* and *Possidenius*, seeing this liable to so many Absurdities, were forced afterward to allow Health, Wealth,

* Plat. Repub. Lib. 1. + Lactant. Lib. 3. Cap. 22.

|| Εἰ πόδις ἀπενθάνουν τὸ σῶμα ταῦτα χρεῖται δεῖταις ὁρέσσεις & οὐκ εἰχεῖσθαι. Εἰ δὲ ἐπίρρωμα μέσει δεῖταις, ἐφ' ὃ εὑρεταις ὁρέσσεις, μανιαστικας, καὶ ποιητικας ἐν τούτοις μητρός γνωματεις μητρας, πατρινης αἰχεστις Hyp. Lib. 3. Cap. 24. ‡ Id. ib.

§ Diog. Laert. Vit. Zen. * Ad. Antol.Lib. 2. + Laert.in Vit. Zen.

and Strength to make it up. *Diogenes* the Cynick *, as all his currish Sect, denied, that there was any Shamefulness in publick Commixtures, and asserted, that Parents † might lawfully sacrifice their Children, and eat their Flesh. And *Epicurus* || allows incestuous Copulation with Mother, or Daughter. *Aristippus* ‡ refused to maintain his own Children, saying they were no more to be regarded than the Spittle, or the Lice which were produced by the Body. He made the positive brutish Pleasure of the Body (not *Epicurus*'s Indolence) to be the chief Good of Man ; and taught, that a wise Man might commit Theft, or Adultery, or Sacrilege, ἐν κακῷ, when he saw convenient Opportunity, and not otherwise ; that these Crimes are not sinful in themselves, setting aside the Opinion of the simple Multitude which has made them so. And *Laertius* records a sophistical Argument of his, which he used, to prove the Lawfulness of Sodomy. *Democritus* † condemns the Use of Marriage for the Trouble of it, and *Epicurus* agrees with him in the same. And even *Aristotle** and *Tully* † are Advocates for Hatred and Revenge, those two most diabolical Dispositions which Mankind is subject to. Now this is enough upon this Head, to shew how mighty deficient your *natural Religion* is to teach Men their Duty ; and how infirm a Rule of Morals human Reason is, when these so great Masters of it could in these Matters be so shamefully mistaken.

4. *Neither was the Practice of the Heathen Philosophers, Their Lives as to Moral Duties, better than their Principles.* And truly, vicious. ; without Breach of Charity, I may conclude them all, except *Socrates* (whom I am willing to have a good Opinion of) to be a Parcel of hypocritical designing Knaves, who talked a great Deal of Virtue, when they had not the least Pretence to it. St. *Austin* || remarks *Plato* to practise

* Laert. in Vit. Diog. † Theoph. Antioch. ad Autol. Lib. 2.

|| Id. ib. ‡ Laert. Vit. Aristippi. † Cle. Alex. Strom. Lib. 2.

* Arist. ad Nicom. Vib. IV. c. 2. † Cic. de Invent. l. 2. &c Ep. ad Att. † Aug. de Civ. Dei, Lib. 8. Cap. 12.

the Idolatry of his Country, tho' against his Conscience. His Spleen and Pride were noted by all his Cotemporaries; which made *Antisthenes* *, when he saw him once vomiting, say, I see his Gall come up, but where is his Pride? The same Philosopher seeing a prancing Horse with gaudy Trappings, said to *Plato*, Behold your Picture. He spent a good Part of his Time with *Aristippus*, as a Flatterer in *Dionysius's* Court. *Diogenes* the Cynick kept a dirty Whore called *Phryne* †, and lay with her openly in the Streets ‖. The famous *Spusippus* was killed in Adultery. *Aristippus* ‡, besides a Houseful of Boys and Whores which he kept, was familiar, as he acknowledges himself, with the famous Strumpet *Lais*. The same *Aristippus* villainously forswore † the Money which was deposited in his Hands. *Crates*, and the Philosophers *Hipparchia* *, used to stroll about the Country, and lie together publickly in the Eyes of the People. *Xenophon* was a notorious Sodomite †, and kept a Boy called *Clineas*, to whom in *Laertius* he thus expresses his scandalous Passion, *I would be blind to all Things else, so I might see Clinias; Thanks to the Day and the Sun that reveal to me Clinias's Face*: And his Adversary *Mero Pharsalinus* there upbraids him, not for the Vice it self, but for his *μηδένα τελείων*, his making Use of grown Men for his lewd Purposes. *Menippus* ‖ the Cynick was a sordid Usurer, and hang'd himself at last for a great Loss. *Menedemus* ‡, another Cynick (as most of the Tribe) despised all Industry and human Sciences; and one shewing him a delicate Sun-Dial, said only, 'twas a fine Invention for a Man not to lose his Supper. The Philosopher *Herillus* † was in his Youth a pathick Boy. *Cleanthes* ‡, *Chrysippus*, and *Zeno*, made away with themselves; and so did *Cato*, whom *Lactantius* calls *Socratica vanitatis imitator*; and *Cleombrotus*, by reading *Plato's* Book of the Immortality of the

* Laert. in Vit. Antist. † Tertul. in Apol. ‖ Laert. in ejus Vit.

‡ Tert. Apol. Lactant. Lib. 3. Cap. 7. Laert. in Aristippo. + Tertul. in Apol. * Laert. in vita Hippar. + Diog. Laert. in Vit. Xenoph. ‖ Id. Vit. Menip. ‡ Id. Vit. Menedemi. + Id. in ejus Vit. † Lact. Lib. 3. Cap. 7.

Soul. In short, the Philosophers in general were noted for their beastly Corruption of the young Scholars they had the Charge of; and this was one of the Articles *, tho' perhaps groundless, which *Anitus* and *Melitus* objected against *Socrates*, and which he was condemned for. Now this Imputation was so notorious against the Philosophers, that *Lucian* makes Sport with it throughout his Dialogues, and the *Socratici Cynædi* was grown to a Proverb to denote the worst of those infamous Wretches. Nay, I remember somewhere, that *Plutarch* does in some Measure apologise for this Vice of the Philosophers, because they make amends by the improving their Minds for the Corruption of their Bodies. These are the Fathers, *Philologus*, of your Infidel Church, whom you build your Religion upon; but, for my Part, let my Soul be with Christ and his Apostles, and all his holy Saints and Martyrs, which I am sure are in a better Condition than these lewd unregenerate Wretches.

5. And as for the common and illiterate People, one *The Lives of the common Pagans* cannot expect that their Lives should be any Thing virtuous, when their Philosophers, who pretended to teach them Virtue, were so mistaken in their Principles, and for the most Part debauched in their Practice: For they, poor People, for the most Part, blindly followed the Impulse of their Senses and Passions, and could propose no other End of their Actions, but the present Gratification of their Affections and Inclinations. For everlasting Life and eternal Glory, which is the great Spring of the Christian Virtue and Holiness, was unknown to them; and was the great Promise only of our blessed Saviour, *Who hath brought Life and Immortality to Light through the Gospel*. They had nothing among them like it, but some fanciful Stories of *Elysium*, which too was generally lookt upon as a poetical Dream, and believed by none so as to found any religious Action upon it. And therefore the Philosophers (who depended little or nothing upon the Rewards of a future State, tho' they might sometime talk of it) devized a hundred Sort of several Ends of human Actions, or *They and the Philosophers wanted a true End of their Actions.*

* Laert. in Vit. Socr.

Notions, wherein they fancied Happiness did consist, which all referred only to this World; which they would never have done, had they stedfastly believed a happy State, or a Reward for Virtue in the next. Thus *Epicurus* would have Man's *Happiness* to consist in an Indolence or Freedom from all Pain, in not hungering, or thirsting, or being cold; and of this he was so confident, that he was wont impiously to say *εν τέτοις άττι πάλαι μαζεύει*, he would contend with *Jupiter* for the Truth of his Opinion. *Dinomachus* and *Callipho* made their End, the *doing any Thing a Man might reap Pleasure by*. *Aristotle*, and most of the Stoicks, made their End *to live according to Virtue*: so that Virtue, according to them, was its own Reward. *Cleanthes*'s End consisted in living agreeable to Nature, and *εν τῷ ευρομένῳ, in understanding Logick*, or Reasoning well. *Panaetius*'s End was, in gratifying the Appetites of Nature, and *Poseidonius*'s, in *contemplating the Truth and Order of the Universe*. *Herillus*'s End was, to *live according to Philosophy*, or Knowledge. And those of the * latter Academy would have it consist in a firmly abstaining from *Appearances or Representations of Senses*. *Anaxagoras*'s End was, *Contemplation*; *Pythagoras*'s, the *Knowledge of the Perfection of the Virtues of the Soul*: *Democritus*'s, the *Tranquillity of the Mind*, which he called the *εὐεξώ*, or Well-being: *Hecatænus*'s, *Sufficiency*: *Nausiphanes*'s, *Admiration*: *Antisthenes*'s, a *Vacancy from Pride*: and the *Aniccreans*, who were a Party of the Cyrenaick Sect, despised their Master *Epicurus*'s End, and neither would have Pleasure, nor any Thing else, the End of human Actions, *but to do what one list*. And as for the Immortality of the Soul, it was denied and ridiculed by all the Followers of *Democritus* and *Epicurus*, it was doubted by the Academicks; it was made only very vivacious and surviving to the Conflagration by the Stoicks; and even the great *Socrates*, the Founder of the Platonick Philosophy, is brought in by *Plato* in his *Phædo* as only having *good*

* Vid. Cic. de Fin. Diog. Laert. & Plutarch. in Vit. Philos. & Clem. Alex. Strom. Lib. 2.

Hopes of it, and of which he will not be very confident. Now who can expect that the common People among the Heathen should make any great Progress in Virtue, when the most knowing among them had no Principle to practise it upon? Indeed some of these whimsical Ends of human Actions might serve a Philosopher to banter upon; but none of the common People would ever govern their Lives by them. When they did not believe the immortal Bliss of another World, they must with the Cyrenaick Philosophers propose all their Happiness in the Pleasures of this; which was the most sensible Deduction, and which the Apostle does plainly confirm upon this Supposition, *What advantageth me if the Dead rise not? let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die,* 1 Cor. xv. 32. And if we consider the Lives and Actions of the ancient Heathen, we shall find the Worship of the Gods, and the Viciousness of their Lives, wholly agreeable to this Hypothesis: And tho' the Lives of Christians generally be not answerable to those admirable Laws of our Saviour they are blessed with; yet those divine Precepts have had that Influence upon the Christian World, as to make the Generality of them live better, and not to be guilty of those notorious Errors and Vices the Heathens were.

And truly, *Philologus*, it is to me a demonstrative Proof of the great Necessity of our Christian Revelation, and the Defect of natural Religion, that since the Preaching of the Gospel a great Part of the World has been freed from many epidemical Vices and Errors, which they were over-run with before. I shall not now trouble you, with shewing, what an Influence the Christian Doctrine had over the Philosophy of the Gentiles after its Propagation; for it is easy for any one to observe, that *Epicetus* and *Antoninus*, *Plutarch* and *Hierocles*, *Maximus Tyrius* and *Arrian*, had quite another Cast in their Morality from the old Philosophers; and their Thoughts appear everywhere more elevated and divine, after they had mended their Philosophy by Christian Principles. I shall only transiently touch upon some of those many Wickedneses

*The Lives
of Christians
better
than the
Pagans in
many Par-
ticulars.*

and

and Mistakes which Christianity has dispelled, and with which the Heathen World was heretofore, and is still (where it continues so) infected with.

Idolatry.

All Men of your Persuasion allow, that *Idolatry* and *Image-worship* are very great Errors, and very injurious to the divine Nature ; and this you know the Heathen World was over-run with. But Christianity, as far as it spreads, has fairly delivered it from this ; unless where the Papists have, in some Measure, brought it back, to the Scandal of our common Christianity.

Magick.

The Use of *Magick* was a Vice that the Heathen were almost universally addicted to, not only *Persians* and *Gauls*, and other barbarous Nations, but also the *Greeks* and *Romans* ; and even the Philosophers themselves, as appears by the Examples of *Apollonius Thyanus*, *Apu-leius*, and *Porphyry* ; but in Christian Nations it is rarely known, it is generally abominated, and when detected, severely punished.

Augury.

The several Sorts of *Augury* were either superstitious Delusions, or else a Communication with evil Spirits, by odd Signs of the Flying of Fowl, by the Entrails of Beasts, or Feeding of Chickens, which universally obtained among the old Pagans ; and which, by the Grace of God, we Christians are not taxable with.

Human Sacrifices.

Human Sacrifice, and the most unnatural Sort of it, of their own Children, was a devilish Custom, which was common to all the Heathen Nations, and was used not only among such barbarous People as the *Syrians* and the *Britans*, but among the *Greeks* and *Romans* ; for * *Eretheus Atticus* sacrificed his own Daughter to *Persephone*, and so did *Marius* his Daughter *Diis Averruncanis* ; which execrable Superstition the Christian World is freed from.

Lewd Worship.

We have nothing in our Worship like the Heathens *Lewd Worship* in the Feasts of *Flora*, *Priapus* and *Cybele*, in which such abominable Lusts were acted, as is a Shame to mention ; and this our Part of the World may thank Christianity for too.

* Justin. Mart. & Demarato in rebus Tragicis, & Dorotheo in rebus Italicis.

I do not know, whether a perfect and *chaste Matrimony* was used in any Part of the World, but among the Christians. Hasty and humoursome Divorces were allow'd both by *Greeks* and *Romans*, and sometimes they super-induced, as they call it, a new Wife over the other. The *Persians** married their Mothers, *Egyptians* their Sisters; and Polygamy was practised all over the East, and in most Parts of the World. But Christianity has established the most decent and peaceable Kind of Matrimony; which is most agreeable to the Ends of Nature; better for the Education and Provision for Children, and for the mutual Satisfaction of each other.

We are beholden to the Christian Religion for that Humanity and good Nature, which obtains in the World since the Planting the Gospel, in Respect of that diabolical Cruelty which reigned among the Heathen. Our Christians, tho' otherways but bad Men, would take no Pleasure in seeing the poor Gladiators forced to butcher one another, as they did; they would abominate that so many Men should die for no Purpose, as were exhibited by *Trajan*, one of the best of their Princes, who in three Quarters of a Year murthered ten thousand Men this Way. Our Flesh trembles at the Thoughts of those horrid Punishments they took Delight in seeing inflicted upon the poor Christians; and we cannot, without Horror, now think of Men's being torn asunder by Boughs of Trees, and wild Horses, of being roasted with Salt and Vinegar, of being broil'd upon Gridirons, and scalded in boiling Oil. The most cruel Tyrants that ever the Christian World beheld, never, like the *Roman* Emperors, fiddled and sung over the Flames of a burning City, made an Entertainment of seeing Men tortured, nor were delighted with the Musick of dying Men's Groans, as *Nero* and *Caligula* were.

We Christians do abhor Self-Murther, and fix a publick Infamy on those that lay violent Hands upon themselves; but among the *Romans* it was accounted a Piece

* Sext. Emp. Hyp. Lib. 3. Cap. 24.

of Bravery, and countenanced by the Philosophers. *Vid.*
Sen. de Ira. Lib. 3. Cap. 15. Plin. Nat. Hist. Lib. 2.
Cap. 63.

Common
Swearing.

Common Swearing is forbidden by our Religion, and discountenanced by all good Men of our Faith, and the most Wicked are not so impudent as to use it in their serious Discourse or their Writings ; but among the Heathens it was used by the most sober Men, for *vai* *Δια*, and *Meherculē*, to swear by *Jupiter* and *Hercules*, is the usual Phrase of *Socrates*, *Plato*, and *Cicero* ; to speak nothing of *Epicurus*, whose Books are noted to be filled with unhallo wed Oaths.

Exposing
Children.

In all Places where Christianity has Footing, Men have a Tendernes for their Children, and take Care to educate them as well as they can, tho' to their own Detriment ; but among the ancient Heathens it was a common Thing to throw their Children, when born, into the next Ditch they met with, and leave who chanced to find them to take Care of them.

Unjust
Wars.

Tho' the Arms of Christian Princes cannot always be excused, yet none of them have ever had the Confidence, as the old Heathens had, bare-facedly to proclaim War for Honour and Glory's Sake. No Prince among us ever went to butcher so many Countries as *Alexander* did, only to wear Garlands ; or as the *Romans* did, to have the Glory of a Triumph ; who, as one observes, if they should have restored again what they had unjustly got, must have been reduced to their *Romulean Cottages*. And I am sure none of our Divines ever stated the Case as *Tully* did, That Wars for Glory's Sake were not absolutely unlawful, but only *mitius gerenda sunt*, they are not to be carried on with such Cruelty as others.

Luxurious
Living.

The most prodigal among us are soberly parsimonious, if compared with those mad Excesses in the Way of Living among the ancient *Romans* ; if we consider what prodigious Quantities of Money were expended in making Shews for the People, in Largitions, in building Baths, Amphitheatres, and the like ; if we recollect, how some of them have made Suppers that cost the Revenue of Provinces

vinces, that pounded inestimable Jewels to drink their Mistresses and Lovers Healths ; that *Heliogabalus* exhibited a naval Fight in the Amphitheatre, and made all the Ships sail and contend in Wine, and that he made a Dish of the Brains only of six hundred Ostriches ; that so considerable a Fellow as *Aesop* the Tragedian, who had got an Estate by Stage-playing, made a Dish of a hundred of the rarest Singing-Birds which imitated Man's Voice, which cost six thousand Sesterces a Piece ; so that the whole Dish stood him in of our English Money *four thousand seven hundred and forty eight Pound.*

We live indeed in a very vicious Age, in which Sen- Enormous Lusts.
suality does highly abound among Christians : But if you consider the Lives of the ancient Heathen, or even Ma-
hometans and Idolaters now-a-days, our Vices are no Ways comparable to their scandalous Turpitudes. The *Greeks* and *Germans* used masculine Venery, as one of the laudable Customs of their Country * ; and in *Egypt* the more common a Whore was, the more honourable, and for this Reason was allowed to wear a *αιροφέλον*, or a Garland of Honour upon her Head. In short, the Christian World has indisputably gained so much of Virtue by the Means of the Gospel, that many of those abominable Lusts which were generally practised by the Heathens, as appears by their Authors, have never been heard of by the Generality of the most lewd and debauched Christians.

And lastly, I observe that before Christianity there was *No devout Worship* hardly any such Thing as a conscientious and devout Wor- *Worship*. ship of God, or even of their own Deities. They never prayed to God for Virtues and Graces, but only for Riches, Honours, or Children, or the like. Their Prayers were generally such as the Woman's in *Juvenal*,

*Formam optat modico pueris, majore puellis
Murmure, cum Veneris fanum videt anxia Mater,
Usque ad delicias votorum — Juv. Sat. 10.*

* Cor. Nepot. Vit. Alcib. Sext. Emp. Hyp. Lib. 3. Cap. 24.

*The anxious Dame to Venus Temple hies;
And for fine Boys she moderately cries :
But for fair Girls her Voice is higher rais'd ;
Eager, and with her bare Petitions pleas'd.*

And all their Sacrifices, which we have an Account of, were only design'd to bribe the Gods, to procure them a Victory, or some such temporal Advantage, or else to return them Thanks for the same.

Orandum est, ut sit mens sana in corpore sano, was rather a philosophical Thought, than the Practice either of the Multitude, or the Philosophers themselves ; and it was never known that ever Men met together in Assemblies, or usually prayed to God in private, for any Blessings of this Nature, but under a revealed Institution.

So that upon the whole, Sir, you see, that natural Religion, as it is the Result of Reason only, is a Rule of Morals miserably defective. For how strangely at a Loss must the poor common People be, to get a Knowledge of a great Part of their Duty, which the most sagacious and learned Philosophers blundered at ? Or how shall we think that natural Religion is sufficient to regulate the Lives of ignorant and barbarous People, which the World is for the most Part made up of ; when two such knowing Nations, as the *Greeks* and *Romans*, were so scandalously mistaken in it ? Make the best of natural Religion you can, it will be at least but a Candle to the Sun, in Respec~~t~~ of the Knowledge which our Christian Revelation affords ; for under the Gospel our very Women and Children, and the ordinariest of our *Catechumens*, are more knowing in moral Duties, and more right in their Notions of the Nature and Attributes of God, than the Sages of old were, after a Life spent in the *Porch* or the *Garden* : And tell me any Philosopher that has bravely defied Death ; and we will with infinite Advantage on our Side, confront him with whole Armies of Christian Martyrs.

Phil. This is brave, positive, tearing Stuff, for a Parson to talk to a bigoted Auditory, where there is no Fear of being contradicted ; but I can never believe, that God should give such an imperfect Law, which you would make of the natural one, to the Generality of Mankind, and put no Body of all the vast Swarms in the Gentile World in Hopes of Salvation, but only some few Christians for their believing in Jesus Christ. God Almighty, I am sure, is a kind and merciful Father, and contrives the greatest Good for all his Creatures, which they are capable of ; and therefore whereas all the Gentile Nations have immortal Souls, and are capable of everlasting Felicity, it can never be supposed, but that in this World they are in the Way to Salvation ; and that the Law that is given them, which can be none but the natural one, is sufficient to attain it by : So that if this be sufficient to carry them to Heaven, you may banter what you please about the Imperfection of it. For my Part, I am for going thither the nearest Way, and that is by natural Religion : I am not for Coasting about to take in Ceremonies and long Articles of Faith, to no Purpose. Either God Almighty has damned all the Heathen World, that practised natural Religion, which none but a Popish or a Calvinistical Cruelty can assert ; or I, who am for the same natural Religion, am in as comfortable a Way of Salvation, as e'er a Gospeller of you all.

Cred. I think, Sir, you conclude a little too fast, when you say, that you modern Theists are in as good Hopes of everlasting Happiness, as the old Heathen ; for I take your Cases to be very different. They, poor People, never were in a Capacity of receiving the glad Tidings of the Gospel, or they were possessed with such invincible Prejudices of Education under a superstitious Worship, that they could not receive the blessed Seed to Improvement ; which, without all Doubt, God will make great Allowances for. But the Persons of your Way, after having received the Seed of God's Word, have trampled upon it ; you have seen the Light of the Gospel, and shut your Eyes upon it ; you have turned Renegadoes to your

God more severe to modern Theists, than ancient Heathens.

your blessed Redeemer, and perfidiously deserted his Institution, which in your Baptism you swore to live and die under. So that you are strangely mistaken, to think that your Condition hereafter will be as good as the old Pagans. Your Cases are as wide, as those of Foreigners and Domestick Rebels, in a Civil War; their Obedience was not expected by Christ, but you have traiterously deserted him, and fought against him, contrary to your sworn Allegiance. So that whatever Mercy they may find at God's Hand, you can expect nothing but the utmost Severity.

Heathens do not go to Heaven.

And then as for the Case of the Heathens, which you would willingly skreen your selves under; tho' I cannot be so uncharitable as to think, that all they are concluded under eternal Damnation, for not being of a Religion they never heard of; yet I can see no Grounds to believe they shall ever be Heirs of our Christian Salvation, or that State of Glory which Christ has promised to his Followers. To be saved, or to partake of whatsoever Glories are comprehended under that Name, is the peculiar Privilege of us Christians; for the Scripture says plainly, *there is no other Name given under Heaven, by which we may expect Salvation, but only the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ; that no Man cometh to the Father but by him; that God added to the Church such as should be saved,* and the like. So that a Heathen has no more Title or Probability to be saved, than I have to be a Nobleman of Venice. Because *Salvation*, as I observed, is the peculiar Christian State of Glory, that Place which our Saviour says he is *gone to prepare for us*, John xiv. 3. So that, tho' the Heathen may probably have other Places, or States of Glory, ours does not belong to them. Nay, it is hardly reconcileable with the distributive Justice of God, to advance unregenerate Heathens to the same State of Happiness, as those that are redeemed by the Blood of his Son, baptised into his Cross, have partaken of his Sufferings, and have denied and mortified the dearest of their Affections in Obedience to his Commands.

But, however, I doubt not but that God may in another manner make Provision for the honest sober Pagans in another World; for in that very Verse, in which our Saviour says, *He goes to prepare a Place for us Christians;* he tells us, *That in his Father's House are many Mansions.* There are many glorious Places or Seats in the Universe, unto which these good People may be transferred, there to enjoy a considerable Happiness, though very unequal to the Joys of our Christian Paradise. Our Mansion or State of Happiness seems to be the choicest of all the rest, one of our Saviour's own choosing and taking up. *In my Father's House are many Mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; I go to prepare a Place for you.* It is a Metaphor taken from a Harbinger's Office: And the Sense is this: *Let not your Hearts be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Fathers House, &c.* I would not have you dismayed upon my Sufferings, and be distrustful about your future State, upon your being initiated into a new Sect of Religion, as if you were not to enjoy so much Happiness hereafter as the Jews, or other Sects of religious Worship in the World shall; for *in my Father's House are many Mansions;* there shall be some Degrees of Happiness, some Seat of Blessedness for good People of all Sorts; *But I go and prepare a Place for you,* I who am the beloved of my Father, and the chiefest in his Glory, will obtain a Place of the most extraordinary Happiness for you to abide in:

So that at last, though it should be granted, that you Theists, that have had a Christian Education, should be admitted to the State of good Pagans in another World; yet you are a very narrow-soul'd People, that you will aspire to no higher a Degree of Happiness, when it lies easy before you, only by maintaining your Gospel-Covenant, which in your Baptism you have engaged to:

Phil. That is more, *Credentius,* than I have Faith to believe yet; I have a great many Rubs to get over, before I can come to that. But, however, I have no Abhorrence to your Christian Worship, I can go to your Churches upon Occasion, hear a Sermon; and say my Prayers with

you, without any Check of Conscience at all. I have no Reason to think, but I might lawfully go to an *Indian* Pagod, and worship the supreme Deity, though under the Representation of a horse-faced Image. I should never stick out to pray to him among *Mahometans* in a *Turkish* Mosque, or hear Mass in a *Papist* Chapel; nay, I am of Opinion, I might, as one expresses it, *Summi Entis vim adorare in florculo **, adore the Power of the supreme Being in a little Flower. For the principal Part of all Religions is the same, *viz.* Morality and a good Life, and the common Notions of Good and Evil; so that I do but laugh at all the little Squabbles of so many angry Sects in the World one with the other; for my Part I fall out with none of them, for they all agree with me as far as my Creed goes, so that I have no Reason to forbear Communion with the worst of them. Indeed most of them have added some Superstructures of their own to natural Religion, which I do not approve; but I can step over a hundred Things of this Nature, for the sake of Peace and Utility. And to speak freely, I could never approve your Christian Zeal and earnest Prayer, to have all the World of the same Christian Religion; for, as the King of *Siam* has observed, the Diversity of religious Worships is one of the great Beauties of the Universe. For says that wise Prince to the Person who came to him in the Name of an Ambassador from the *French* King, and proposed to him his turning Christian, *I wonder that Prince should so busy himself in a Matter relating to God, for which there is no Sign that God does shew any Concern himself, as leaving it altogether to Man's Discretion.* For (says he) the true God who created Heaven and Earth, and all the Creatures comprehended therein, and who has endowed them with Natures and Inclinations so various, had it pleased him, when he gave Men Bodies and Souls alike, he could have infused into them the same Sentiments of the Religion they were to profess, and have united all Nations under one Law. But 'tis obvious, that Providence permits Variety of Sects and Opini-

* In Epistle of a Deist in Prizcoviæ's Works, p. 600.

ons, because God takes as much Pleasure to be adored with different Forms of Worship and Ceremonies, as to be glorified by the wonderful Diversity of his Creatures, whose various Beauties set forth his infinite Power. So that, in short, *Credentius*, I think it every Man's Duty to comply with the Religion established in his Country, whatever his private Thoughts may be concerning it; and that God Almighty is satisfied with the inward Worship of the Mind, though for Peace Sake he complies with an erroneous outward one. But, however, I hold his Folly inexcusable, that will expose himself to Suffering and Contempt, rather than comply with a few simple Niceties, which particular Sects and Nations are fond of; when all of them own natural Religion for their Foundation. In a Word, as some have boasted themselves to be Citizens, so I am a Church-man of the whole World; and though you perhaps may be offended at me for an extravagant Latitudinarian, yet I am sure I have more Reason on my Side, than those narrow-soul'd People, that are hedging in Salvation, and keeping their Communion only within the Bounds of a little paltry Sect.

Cred. I thank you, Sir, for this great Freedom, for Not indif-
by this Frankness you have laid open the very Soul of ferent, to
Deism; but withal have given such a vile Character of it, be of any
as no honest Man would be very fond of embracing it. Religion.
I am afraid there are too great a Number of Men in the World of these Sentiments, and by whom Religion suffers more than by avow'd Atheists; for those are open and generous Enemies, whilst the other are striking at the Vitals of the Church, as they lie foster'd in her Bosom. But that you may understand how unreasonable and wicked this Opinion is, be pleased with me a little to consider,

1. What horrid Hypocrisy and Dissimulation it is, to 'Tis Hypo-
communicate with a Religion, that you do not believe crisy.
a Title of the Truth of. There cannot be a greater Falsity and Cheat in all the World than this is. To tell a Lie, or to act a shuffling Trick in bargaining, or the like, seldom deceives but a very few; but such a wicked Dissimulation, in Matters of Religion, deceives a whole

Congregation, or it may be in a Man of Figure, a whole Nation. This is the basest Act which any Man of Honour, or any Pretence to Virtue can condescend to; so perfidiously to deny the Truth, to make Use of such false Arts, and such little creeping Tricks, to persue an Advantage. But what is worst of all, it is the most intolerable Affront to God Almighty that can be imagined, to offer to pay a Worship to him, which we are conscientious, that neither he nor our selves do approve, and to join in Prayers and Devotions, which we know must be an Abomination to him. Which must,

Sometimes Idolatry. 2. Be more wicked, when the Worship you join with is downright idolatrous. What Excuse can you make for worshiping or falling down before a *Popish Host*, which you believe to be only a Wafer, and you pay to it the Worship due to the supreme God? How can you without Horror think of worshiping an *Indian Idol*, with Pretence it is but a Symbol of the Deity, when 'tis generally but the Representation of some horrid Figure the Devil uses to appear to them in? You may talk what you please of the Extensiveness of your Communion; but I protest, I am scar'd at such a Religion as you pretend to, and I think you had better, with the Atheists, openly bid Farewel to all, and lay Claim to none.

Morality not the same in all Religions. 3. As to what you assert, that the Morality of all Religions is the same, and is the principal Part of them; I think, that is a great Mistake. For many Religions are so made up of ceremonious Foppery, that Morality is little taken Notice of in them; and some retain such dangerous Errors and Faults in their Doctrine and Worship, that there is no Communion with them, without Violation of moral Honesty, or intrenching upon the Dictates of natural Religion. As when the Worship is idolatrous, when wrong and injurious Notions are entertain'd of God's Nature, when dead Men, Devils, or Images have divine Honours paid them; when Indulgences are granted to Sin, and Crimes are pretended to be pardoned without Repentance; when a good Intention shall be allow'd to justify evil Actions, and the like. So that there is no communicating with such

such Religions, without committing an Offence against the ordinary Rules, even of natural Religion, and schismatically and perfidiously deserting that true Religion we have been educated in.

4. As to what you say concerning every Man's being *Not always* obliged to be of the established Religion of his Country, *to be of the Religion of our Country* and to profess (to speak in the usual Way) all the Tales which the supreme Magistrate shall think fit to allow ; I *try,* look upon this to be the wildest of all *Hobbs's* silly Paradoxes. For if the Magistrate be the publick Conscience by which all Men are to be governed, as he asserts, why did God give every Man a Conscience of his own, which natural Religion informs us, every one is to be governed and judged by ? There are very few Men can quiet their own Consciences, after the Commission of a grievous Crime, only because their Prince might allow it ; or believe a Ballad to be Holy Scripture, though there was an Act of Parliament to call it so. But if we must be of the Religion, which the Magistrate enjoins, we must make the Magistrate, God Almighty ; for no one has Authority to command any religious Doctrine to be believed, but God. Besides, this Opinion would make Religion the most trifling and inconstant Thing in the World ; a Man might change his Religion as often as he does his Cloaths ; and the poor Men of the Frontiers in *Flanders* should be *Papists*, *Calvinists*, or *Lutherans*, three different Religions, in so many Moons. This would be to render contemptible the noblest Thing we are capable of doing, the Service we owe to Almighty God, and to make it the Sport and May-game of prophanes and atheistical Men.

5. But whereas you assert, That God Almighty will *sin out-* be satisfied with the inward good Intention and Worship *marily to* of the Mind, whilst you outwardly comply with the *comply,* most false and erroneous Worship : This Opinion will *with a* open a Gate to all the Deceit and Villany in the World. *false Religion.* Upon this Principle, Men may murder and steal, for the Glory of God ; and cut Men's Throats, to save their Souls. There would be no tying any Man by Oath or Compact ; *lingua juravi, mentem injurataen gero,* would *always*

always be the Burthen of their Song, and a good Pretence too, if the inward Sense of their Mind might be allow'd to be different from their Actions.

No Folly to
suffer for
Religion.

6. As to what you lay down, that 'tis a Folly to suffer for a true Religion, rather than to comply with a false one; I take that to be a most false and pestilent Doctrine, but however it is that which your Sect is founded upon. For you Theists owe your Origin here in *Europe* to this pusillanimous Opinion, and to the Want of Christian Perseverance, and a patient Bearing of Afflictions. For as Calamities make good Men better, so they make often very ill Men worse. Not a few Sufferers in our late civil Wars took up with these damnable Opinions, because their Religion had exposed them to some Losses; and the same, I hear, has been the Misfortune of many poor Gentlemen in the late Persecution in *France*. But are Religion and a good Conscience Things of so slight a Value, as to be parted with for such temporal Profits? Must Truth be thus sacrificed to Interest? If a Man believes the Holy Scripture, it will make him tremble when he but thinks of such a perfidious Defection. *He that denies me before Men, him will I deny before my Father which is in Heaven,* Matt. x. 33. 'Tis hardly possible that they that were once enlightened, &c. if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto Repentance. Nay, if he considers but the Words of a Heathen Poet, it is enough to make him much more honest than this comes to.

-----*Phalaris licet imperet, ut sis
Falsus, & admoto dictet perjuria TAURO :
Summum credo nefas, animum preferre pudori,
Et propter vitam vivendi perdere causas.* Juv. Sat. 8,

Though Phalaris commands thee to deny
The Truth, or in his brazen Bull to fry;
Tell the fierce Tyrant, that his Threats are vain,
And Vice must not be chose, to bribe off Pain:
That he's the greatest Villain, who will strive
To lose the Ends of living, for to live.

7. But for the King of Siam's Argument, I wonder how so many Men should be dazled with such a tinsel Reason as this. Whether this be the King of Siam's Argument, as is reported, or no, I shall not now dispute ; although by the Sophistry of it, one would guess it had more of the Jesuit in it, than the Prince. But I pray, how does he know, that God takes so much Pleasure in these various Forms of Worship ? This is a Thing taken for granted, which no Body that owns a revealed Institution will allow. For if God have revealed his Will by the Command of any particular Worship, as he has done to Jews and Christians, then all other Religions do of Course fall to the Ground. Well, but God permits these different Religions, by his not ordering all Men to be of the same Sentiments in Religion ; whereas he might as easily have done this, as to have made their Bodies and Souls alike. But is God's Permission a Sign of his good liking ? Why then by the same Rule all the Villanies which are committed in the World are well pleasing to him, because they cannot be done but by his Permission. Besides, 'tis very true on the other Side, that God might have infused into all Men the same Sentiments of Virtue and Vice, and have made all Men good alike ; but 'tis plain, that he permits the greatest Number of Men to be vicious, which is therefore as evident a Sign that he does not concern himself about Virtue and Vice, and therefore 'tis a Wonder that Men should shew such a Concern about Morality, which God himself by this Permission does seem to have little Regard to. Now you see this same Argument, if there be any Thing in it, will make as much against natural Religion, as it does against revealed ; and therefore you Theists ought to have a Care, how you make Use of it, for you thereby put a Weapon into the Atheist's Hands, and plainly give up your Cause to him. But on the other Side, you ought to consider, that as God's Permission of Vice is no Sign of his liking it, he having otherways declared his Will, by giving to all Men a Law of Virtue ; so his tolerating so many false Religions, does not evince his Approbation of them, when he

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has manifestly declared his Will, how he will be worshipped, *viz.* in the Christian Religion. This is that Way which he himself has set out for us to walk in, and to go in any other Road is but wandring.

*Simplicis ipse Vie dux est Deus, ille per unum
Ire jubet mortale genus, quam dirigit ipse
Sublimem dextro celsa ad fastigia clipe.* Prud. cont. Sym.

*God is our Guide in one plain simple Way,
He would not have Mankind in others stray.
That one steep Road which to the Right does tend,
Is the sole Way that does to Heaven ascend.*

Of Revealed Religion, and the Doctrine of the Mediator.

Phil. I think, Sir, we have talked enough about natural Religion; and therefore, Sir, if you will oblige me with your Thoughts concerning that revealed one which is owned by Christians, and will give me Satisfaction as to some Scruples I have conceived concerning it, it will be a very agreeable Favour. I confess, I am not very averse to think, that there is a great Defect generally in Men's Reasonings concerning religious Matters, and Men's Thoughts do very much vary therein; so that it is not a difficult Supposition to suppose, that the gracious Deity, who has Compassion upon all our Infirmities, has contrived a Way more certainly to guide fluctuating Nature in such momentous Concerns, and may have been pleased sometimes to have enlightned Men with a Ray or two of his Wisdom, from above, by Revelation of some divine Truths. But then how shall we come to know, to whom he has particularly vouchsafed this Favour? What Marks of Grace shall we go by; to distinguish who are Heaven's darling Favourites, that are blessed with such obliging Manifestations? The Jews and Christians indeed pretend to it; but why not the Turks and Tartars as well as they? But if a bold Pretence to Revelation be an Argument for it, every little Hedge-Sect of Idolaters in *In-*
dia

dia shall bid as fair for Inspiration, as e'er a Jew or Christian of you all. And in Truth, if there be any such Thing as Inspiration, for ought I know, all the different Religions in the World may be (to use the Apostle's Phrase) but *Diversity of Gifts of the same Spirit*. The Chinese may have the same divine Revelation to worship their *Tanquam* and *Teiquam*, as we have to worship Jesus Christ. The *Banians* and *Bramins*, the Priests in India, may have the same Plea for all the Devotions they claim for their Deities there, and so may the *Japonese* for their famous Gods *Fotoques* and *Gomes*, as the *Mexicans* for the Rites paid to their *Virachoca*. Nor does my Conjecture stand singly alone, but I have your own sacred Writings to back me in it : For there are many Texts of Scripture, which seem plainly to affirm, that God Almighty has revealed his Will by a positive Institution to the Gentile World, whom you look down with so much Contempt upon, under Pretence of your superabundant Privileges. For Gen. xiv. 18, &c. it is said, That *Melchisedeck was King of Jerusalem, and Priest of the most high God*; and that he *blessed Abraham*, which was a principal Office of the Mosaical Priesthood (*Num. vi. 23.*) and that *Abraham paid Tithes to him of his Spoils*. From whence it is plain, that God had a revealed Institution before the Jews, or their Forefather *Abraham*'s Time, and that when *Abraham* is commended for keeping God's *Commandments, and Statutes, and Laws*, Gen. xxvi. 5. it is only these positive Injunctions in the Land of *Canaan*, which *Melchisedeck* was the Priest, or Prophet, or Dispenser of. So Mal. i. 10. *Who is there among you that would shut the Doors of my Temple, that Fire should not be kindled upon mine Altar! For from the rising of the Sun, unto the going down thereof, my Name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place Incense shall be offered unto my Name, and a pure Offering, for my Name shall be great among the Heathen, saith the Lord of Hosts*. By which Words it is plain, that at that Time the Prophet did not think the Jews dearer to God than other People, and that the Heathens worship was as acceptable to him as theirs.

So *Psal.* clxv. 18. *The Lord is nigh to all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in Truth.* And in the same *Psalm*, v. 9. it is said, *God is good to all, and his tender Mercies are over all his Works.* So God himself gives a Testimony of *Job* a Gentile, that *there was none like him in the Earth, a perfect and an upright Man,* Job i. 8. So *Jonas* said he determined to flee to *Tarsus*, because he knew God to be a gracious and merciful God, *Jon.* iv. 2. and who would therefore pardon even the Gentile *Ninevites*. Besides, we read in Scripture, that several uncircumcised Gentiles had the Gift even of Prophecy, as *Enoch, Noah, Abimelech, and Balaam.* Nay, several of the Jewish Prophets prophesy for the Use of the Gentiles. *Ezechiel* prophesies to all the Nations then known; *Obadiah* prophesies only for the Children of *Edom*; and *Jonas* principally for the *Ninevites*; *Isaias* foretels the Calamities and Deliverance of the *Ægyptians*, *Is. xix. 19.* and the Prophet *Jeremy* is called expressly a Prophet of the Nations or Gentiles: *Before thou camest out of the Womb, I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a Prophet unto the Nations,* *Jer. i. 5.* and *Chap. xlviij. 31.* He says he will howl for *Moab*, he will cry out for *Moab*, and v. 36. *My Heart shall sound for Moab like Pipes, &c.* which pathetick Expressions shew, that he was sent by God a Prophet, as well for the Gentile Moabites as the Jews. But as for the Prophecy of *Balaam*, that is so express, that all the major and minor Prophets cannot pretend more to the Spirit of Prophecy, than this one Gentile Seer. So that, *Credentius*, you may make what brags you please of the Jewish and Christian Revelations, but if you do not own old *Balaam*, as much a Heathen as he was, to be a very good Prophet, you will want one of the most considerable Proofs of Christianity. Nay, the Scripture gives this Man all the Characters of a prophetick Spirit: *He hath said, who heard the Words of God, who saw the Vision of the Almighty, falling into a Trance, but having his Eyes open,* *Numb. xxiv. 4.* Now methinks it is a little unfair, for you to make such an Outcry about God's particular Favour to you by Revelation; when those very revealed Scriptures themselves,

selves, which you make such Brags of, allow it to the Heathen as well as you.

Cred. One can hardly think you Theists are in earnest, No Revelation to the Gentiles for their Religions. when you object against the Scriptures and our Religion, that God has revealed himself to other Nations as well as us; I always take you to have a Mind only to be pleasant, and to put a Banter upon us Christians, rather than to defend your own Tenets, which do not seem much to be furthered by it. And when *Spinoza* contends so mightily for it, I fancy it must be only an humorsom Paradox of that odd Man, and not his settled Opinion; or at least the Effect of a Pique he had conceived against the Jews, and so was resolv'd to set them upon the same Foot with other Mortals. But that the rest of the World have no Revelation for the diverse Religions they profess, will appear by considering,

1. That most of the Religions in the World are idolatrous. Now it is impossible to suppose, that God by a Revelation should command Men to do that, which all wise Men would be ashamed to do; to fall down before Stocks and Stones, to worship the Sun and the Moon, senseless inanimate Creatures, and to adore dead Men, and tyrannical Princes; or even Herbs or Beasts. Now though we should suppose, that God was in no Ways jealous of his Honour, and that it was indifferent to him whatsoever Thing we worshiped; yet as he is the God of *Truth*, 'tis impossible he should command a false Worship, or instruct People in paying Devotion to Things as Gods, which are only mean, and perhaps wicked Creatures. Now the far greatest Part of the unchristian World are, and have been, such Idolaters; and therefore to make God to have revealed to them their Superstitions, is to make God to represent himself such as it is impossible for him to be; to be delighted in a Worship which is false and wicked, and to be himself the chief Author of the Imposture; which is so horrid, as no Body will contend for.

2. Other unchristian Nations that are not Idolaters (as Immoral. chiefly the Mahometans) profess a Religion which allows

Immor-

Immorality, the Founder whereof was rather possessed by the Devil, than inspired by God : A lewd debauched fanatical Wretch, that lived by Rapine and Murther, and spent his Days in Whoredom, Adulteries, and Sodomies. Now his Religion allows its Followers to propagate it by the Blood of the Opposers, and by all Manner of Cruelty and Barbarity against Men of other Persuasions. It allows Concubinacy and Whoredom, and even Sodomy it self ; and the very Rewards it proposes in another World, are such infamous Lusts, as a good Man would be ashamed to think of in this.

3. As for your Instances out of Scripture, because you should not too much insult over us, as having wounded us with our own Weapons, will you be pleased to accept this Answer to the first, That *Melchisedeck* is no Proof of a Revelation among the Gentiles, more than of that universal Revelation, which was given by *Adam* and *Noah*, to all Mankind ; and upon which, as was shewn before, what is generally called natural Religion is grounded upon. For though *Melchisedeck* was no Jew, as not descending from *Abraham* ; yet he was not properly a Gentile, especially such a one as is usually understood by the Word, *viz.* one that has degenerated from the ancient and true Religion, into an idolatrous Superstition. For *Melchisedeck* was a true and orthodox Member of the ancient *Noachical* Church, and no Ways tinctured with the prevailing idolatrous Vice of those Ages, but in the midst of the mighty Defection to false Gods and Idols, was a *Priest of the most high God*. So that 'tis a great Mistake to say, That God had a Priesthood among the Gentiles, from the Instance of *Melchisedeck* ; because, I say, *Melchisedeck* was no Gentile, but a constant Perseverer in God's Church, from which the Gentiles had even at that Time made a Defection ; he kept up to the *Noachical* Precepts, which the Gentiles round him had neglected. But if in strict speaking you will have him a Gentile, because he was not circumcised, it does not from hence follow, that God had an instituted Church among other Nations, distinctly instituted as the Jewish was. For the Scripture does not give

*Melchise-
deck.*

give us a particular Account who this *Melchisedeck* was. The Jews will have him to be *Shem*, the eldest Son of *Noah*, because perhaps, they would allow no Body else to be greater than their Father *Abraham*, to bless him : But though this does well enough agree with the Age of *Shem*, who lived till after *Abraham's* Time ; yet it is not probable that *Shem* dwelt in the Land of *Canaan*, which was the Seat of *Cham's* Posterity. But be he *Shem*, or any one else, and though he were a Worshiper of the true God, yet he was so only upon the Principles of the old Revelation made to *Noah*, which was common to all the World with him : He had not any particular Revelations afforded him, as *Moses*, to found a new Church upon ; neither he nor his People had any such Favour vouchsafed them, as to have the *Oracles of God committed to them*, as the Jews had, *Rom. iii. 2.* He was a Priest as he was the Elder of a Family in the old patriarchal Way, and not by any positive Institution among the Gentiles ; and so blessed *Abraham* who communicated with him in the divine Worship whilst he did officiate, as he might have done with *Abraham* in such an eucharistical, or any other Sacrifice. 4. As for that Text of *Malachi*, where it is said, That *God's Name shall be great among the Gentiles* ; (though *Spinoza* translates, *it is great among the Gentiles*, when the Verb is wanting in the *Hebrew*, which is wrong, for the Book is Prophetick, and speaks of Futures, and therefore must be rendred *shall be*) this does by no Means set the Gentiles at that Time on a Level with the Jews, but is a remarkable Prophecy of the Kingdom of the *Messias*, when the Partition-Wall should be taken away, and God should have one Church made up both of Jews and Gentiles. 5. As to those Places of the *Psalmist*, That *God's tender Mercies are over all his Works* ; and that *God is nigh unto all them that call upon him* : It is the Design of the *Psalmist*, to shew forth God's superlative Goodness in this *Psalms*, and therefore among the rest of God's Attributes, he does praise him for his merciful Providence over his Creatures, *His tender Mercies are over all his Works*. And so his being *nigh unto all them that call*

call upon him, does not in the least denote any particular divine Institution like the Jewish Revelation among the Heathen, but is only in general, an Assertion of God's universal Love to Mankind, and his Willingness to assist them, which no reasonable Man can deny. 6. As for your Instance in *Job*, *That he was a good Man and acceptable to God*; why, so were all the good Patriarchs before the Law, or the Circumcision; nay, though we should grant that God spake by Revelation to this good Man, as it may appear from *Chap. xxxviii.* 1. yet it does not follow, that all the idolatrous Heathens afterwards received the same Favour. For before the Law, and in other Nations, where the Law was not received, Morality, together with the easy *Noachical Precepts*, were the Rule of their Duty; and therefore until they had forfeited this Communication of the divine Favour, by the Enormity of their Lives, and their Deviation from the true Worship, they had as good a Title to the Inspiration of God, whenever he should please to afford it them, as the Jews had after their Church was instituted. 7. But as for what you allege, that *Jonah* was only an *Ethnick Prophet*, I think, by your Favour, that is a great Mistake. For *Jonah* was principally a Prophet to the Jews, and prophesied under *Jeroboam the second*; the King of *Israel*, as is plain from the 14th *Chap.* of the 2d Book of *Kings*, where it is said, *That Jeroboam restored the Coast of Israel, from the entring in of Hamath unto the Sea of the Plain, according unto the Word of the Lord God of Israel, which he spake by the Hand of his servant Jonah, the Son of Amitai, the Prophet, which was of Gath-hepher*. Whether or no that Prophecy which is there referred to, were ever written or no, or whether it was only verbal, we cannot now determine, there being nothing like it in our Canon of Scripture; but it is from hence very evident, that *Jonas* was a Prophet originally to the Jews. That he was afterwards sent to the Gentiles, was a great Favour indeed to that Heathen City of *Niniveh*; but then he had first prophesied to the *Israelites*, and when they had prosited little or nothing by it, he like Christ

Christ and his Apostles, turned to the Gentiles. 8. As for your Exceptions from *Enoch*, *Noah*, &c. they lived before the general Corruption by Idolatry; and therefore it is but reasonable to suppose, that they living up to the old true patriarchal Religion, might partake of the divine Revelation as well as the Jews. And the Prophet *Eze-
chiel's* Prophecy is wholly taken up in shewing God's Judgments upon the Jews, and endeavouring to bring them to a true Sense of their Sins; only a Chapter or two are interposed to foretell God's Vengeance likewise upon their Enemies, whose Wickedness God's All-wise Providence had made Use of to be a Scourge for the Sins of his People. And so for the Prophets *Isaiah* and *Jeremy*, their bemoaning the Calamities of the Heathens of *Jazer* and *Edom*, is not a Prophecy on their Behalf, but only is a lively Hypotyposis, or poetical Description of the sad Miseries which those People should undergo, to hearten up the Jews in their Afflictions, when they should understand, that God would lay such heavy Burthens upon their Enemies; and to shew them, that they had no Reason to forsake the true Religion, when they should see that the Heathens underwent as severe Judgments as they. 9. And so again as to the Prophecy of *Obadiah*, whom you assert to have been a Prophet only to the *Edo-
mites*, he was a Prophet only to the *Israelites*, and for ought appears to the contrary, originally of Jewish Extraction; for I think little Credit is to be given to the Jewish Authors, who would make him an *Edomitish* Profelyte. But that *Obadiah* was a Prophet to the Jews only, is evident by the whole Tenor of his short Prophecy, where first are denounced God's severe Judgments against the *Edomites*, the Enemies of the Jews, and his Vengeance for their Pride and Insolence, and afterwards the Jews Delivery from them, and Conquest over them. *But upon mount Sion shall be Deliverance, and Jacob shall possess their Possessions. And the House of Jacob shall be a Fire, and the House of Joseph a Flame, and the House of Esau for Stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them, and there shall not be any of the House of Esau; for the*

the Lord hath spoken it, v. 17. 18. Now does this look like an *Edomitic* Prophet? But this is just as *Spinoza*, and *Hobbs*, and the Devil are used to quote Scripture. 10. The most considerable Instance is that of *Balaam*, who may seem to be an *Ethnick* Prophet, by his living in a Heathen Country, and his being at the Command of a Heathen King, and by his predicting so plainly such remarkable Events, which afterwards so punctually came to pass; as the Greatness of the Common-wealth of *Israel*, the Destruction of the *Canaanitic* Nations, and the Coming of the *Messias*. But then although this be true, yet it does not from hence follow, that the Gift of Prophecy was common to other Nations, as well as to the Jews, from this Instance. Because this Prophecy was designed only for the Benefit of the Jewish Nation, and although it was pronounced by the Mouth of a Heathen Man, yet the Design and Purpose of it was for the Good of the Jews; and truly it was but a small Privilege of the Heathens, to have one of them to pronounce a Prophecy of God, only in Favour of the Jews, and that too for the utter Extirpation of themselves. So that for ought I see in this Instance, *Balaam's* Arts would be as good an one altogether, to prove, That Inspiration is common to Brutes too, because God once made Use of his Mouth, to confute his Master's Folly. 11. Well! but *Balaam*, you say, was a true and accustomed Prophet, and not made Use of only by God upon this extraordinary Exigence. I am afraid, this is an Assertion, which cannot be so easily made out as said; and indeed the contrary thereof may be proved by the Context. For first he cannot be a true Prophet of God, because he made use of unlawful Arts, and as the Scripture says, *sought for Inchantments*, Chap. xxiv. 1. and what we from the Vulgar, translate *the Rewards of Divination*, are in the Original *only Divinations*, (i. e.) Instruments of Divination, conjuring Books, Wands, or the like. And secondly, he is called *Kosem*, a Diviner or Sorcerer, *Josb.* xiii. 22. which Word has always an ill Character fixt on it in Scripture, notwithstanding *Spinoza* maintains the contrary, though without any

any Instance of it. I have carefully examined all the Words that I find in Scripture, which come from this Root, and I do not find any, unless by Way of Metaphor, but carry an ill Sense, and signify unlawful Knowledge of future Things; or a lying pretended one; and as for those Places of the Prophets, *Isa. xxiv. 25. Jer. xiv. 14. Ezech. xiii. 7, and 23. Micah iii. 6, &c.* where they may seem to signify simple Prophecy, yet it will be manifest by closely considering the Places, that they are only *harder Words* to characterise the false Prophecies of some lying Prophets, among the *Jews*; as if I should call an Astrologer a Gypsy, or a Conjuror, Names which carry more vulgar Disrepute and Shamefulness in them. I know but two Places in Scripture where they are used in a good Sense: The first is, *Prov. xvi. 10. A divining Sentence, or Divination* (not as we translate it, too far from the original Words, *a divine Sentence*) *is in the Lips of the King, and his Mouth transgresseth not in Judgment:* That is, the King is a wise sagacious Man in his judicial Determinations, makes shrewd Conjectures from outward Appearance to discover Men's inward Intentions, and by that Sort of political Divination awards Judgment accordingly. The second is, *Isa. xxxii.* where it is said, *The Lord doth take away from Judah the Judge and the Prophet, the Kosem, the Conjuror, or the Prudent, and the Ancient.* Where the Septuagint do very well translate *Kosem περιεστων*, one that makes good Conjectures or Divinations; which is a metaphorical Sense of the Word in most Languages, drawn from the Heathen Auguries, as is particularly plain in those Verses of *Ovid* concerning the Children's Play at Even and Odd:

*Est etiam, pars sit numerus qui dicat an impar,
Ut divinatas anferat Augur opes. Ovid. de Nuce.*

Phil. By your Criticisms you have roved a little too far from the main Point: but pray, if *Balaam* were not a true Prophet, how came he to say, that he would bring *Balak's* Messengers Word, *what the Lord Jehovah, the true*

Judaical God, should speak unto him? Numb. xxii. 7. *The L O R D refuseth to give me leave to go with you, v. 13. I cannot go beyond the Word of the L O R D my God, to do less or more, v. 18. And God came unto Balaam, &c. And Balaam said unto God, &c. v. 9, 10.* I pray how came he to have this Intercourse with the Lord *Jehovah*, and yet be such a Heathen Conjurer, as you would make him? Nay, how came he to make such fine Prophecies of Jesus Christ, and yet be such a diabolical Necromancer?

Cred. I think, *Philologus*, you are not a little mistaken in arguing after this Manner. For it does not appear from Scripture, that *Balaam* did endeavour to seek after *Jehovah*, or the true God, when he designed to make Enquiry after the future Fate of the *Israelites* upon *Balak's* Request, but only after *Baal*, or some other false Deity of the *Moabites*. That the Search made to him, is said to be made to *Jehovah*, is, because *Jehovah* is the Jewish Name for God, which, no doubt, in the *Moabitish* Language was *Baal*, or some such like Name; which *Moses* writing in Hebrew, calls by the Jewish Name *Jehovah*. Not that *Baal* and *Jehovah* was the same, but that *Balaam* took his *Baal*, a false God, *viz.* some deified Prince of that Part of the World, for *Jehovah*, or the true God; and therefore *Moses*, in regard to his Intention, calls him by that Name. Nor doth the Truth of his Prophecy argue him to be a divine Prophet, to whom the true God was wont to reveal himself; because, although he might intend to make his Address to a false God; yet *Jehovah*, or the true God, might take Advantage from this to promote his true Religion, by inspiring a false Prophet of the Heathens, and in despight of them, to make them hear the Prediction of their own Destruction from the Mouth of their own Friend. Nor is it so strange to suppose, that a Prophecy concerning our Saviour should come from a Heathen Priest; since the Sibyls have predicted the same, and filled the whole World full of Expectation of some mighty Deliverer about the Time of our Saviour's Birth, as *Virgil's Eclogue* is an undeniable Instance.

Phil. But if natural Religion be so defective, and Revelation so necessary, as you contend for; and withal, if the *Jews* were only blessed with this Favour, how can we excuse the partial Justice of God, to make so much of this odd Sort of People, and leave all the rest of the World to shift for themselves, as if they were none of his Creatures? Methinks of all the Nations of the World, the divine Prudence should never have picked out this currish Nation, to have lavished out so many Favours upon a People, that from the Time of their Original, to their Overthrow, were the Opprobry of the World, who as * *Tacitus* and *Justin* tell us, were expelled *Egypt* for a Pack of scabbed Lepers, that would have infected the whole Country; and when they lived at *Rome*, they were observed by † *Juvenal*, to be of such a dogged Temper, that they would not so much as direct a Man in his Way, unless he was of the same circumcised Race. Now how can any one, *Credentius*, suppose, that God Almighty should overlook all the Nations of the World, and make himself so extraordinary familiar with this cross-grain'd Rabble? One would have thought, if the Deity had been inclined to have made a Distinction between any of his Creatures, that the *Greeks* or *Romans* should have stood fairest for such a Favour; for they were Nations of great Candour and Generosity, who had Minds that did generally abound with extraordinary Virtue and Honour: But the *Jews*, of all Nations in the World, were remarked for sower unsociable Qualities; and their own Prophets cannot forbear calling them often a *stubborn, untoward, perverse, crooked, and stiff-necked People*. And therefore, *Credentius*, pray let me see how you can excuse the Justice and Wisdom of God in being so liberal of his Revelations to this People only.

Cred. I do not in the least see, *Philologus*, how the Justice of God is touched by this gracious Manifestation of his Will in particular to the *Jews*, rather than to other Nations; or that they deserved it less than any other. For,

* *Tacit. Hist. Lib. 5. Just. Hist. Lib. 36.*

† *Juv. Sat. 6.*

This agreeable to God's usual Providence.

1. This was no more than what God had done before in other Ages of the World, in order to preserve to himself a *Church* or *chosen People*, selected from the other ungodly People of the World. Thus are the Children of *Seth*, God's visible Church in the Antediluvian Times, who were for this very Reason called the *Sons of God*, Gen. vi. 2. And the Children of *Shem* and *Japhet* are separated from the profane Off-spring of *Ham*, Gen. ix. 26, 27. And therefore in the Time of *Abraham*, when Idolatry was spread well nigh over all the World, it was very wisely contrived of God Almighty, to set up the Post-
erity of this good Man, to be the Worshipers of the *true God*, when the rest of the World had lapsed into profane Idolatry.

No Injus. fit to
in God.

2. Neither can this argue any Injustice in God, because it does not appear that the Heathens had any Right to demand of God a particular Revelation. They had the *Law of Nature*, as 'tis generally called, or the old Adamical Revelation to walk by, and what Rewards or Punishments were annexed to that, they were either to expect or fear. This was sufficient (tho' with more Diffi-
culty) to square their Lives by; and God was in no Ways obliged to make their Task more easy, since he might dispense his Rewards upon what Conditions he pleased. I doubt not but that good Gentiles had their Reward allotted for them; but then I see no Reason why they should be their own Caterers, and cut out what Work they pleased for themselves. For, if it pleased God to set the Gentiles to work out their Salvation with more Pains and Danger, and the Jews and Christians with less, why should the divine Justice be taxed with Partiality, more than you should be, when you think fit to set some of your Workmen to an easier, and others to an harder Task, when all of them are obliged to undergo the most difficult and painful, when you shall be pleased to assign it?

Other Instances of Providence as unaccountable.

3. Neither can I see any Reason why the Justice or Wisdom of God should be called in Question for this liberal Distribution of Revelations to the *Jews* alone, for which

which we can assign no Reason. For there are a thousand Instances in Providence to be made, which are subject to the same Difficulties. Tell me why the unhappy Inhabitants of *Greenland*, and *Iceland*, are not all born in such a Garden of the World as *Italy*? Or why God bestowed such a delicious Soil upon the *Italians* only, above all the rest of the *Europeans*? Tell me, *Philologus*, why God has blessed you with a more delicate Personage and a happier Stock of natural Parts than your Neighbours? Why such an one is born to a great Estate, and others to none at all? Why such an one is made a Man, and not a Monkey? Why another Thing is an Animal, and not a Tree? Now these are all particular Favours of God Almighty, which other Parts of the Creation want; and yet you will not say that this is any Reflexion upon the Wisdom or Justice of God. Why therefore should we tax them in bestowing this Favour of particular Revelation to the *Jews*? For I dare say, I can as easily prove, That the *Jews* were as much deserving of their Prophecy, as any Man can be to be an *Italian*, or an *Englishman*, to be beautiful or wealthy. We Men are not able to give a Reason for any of these Benefits, and therefore must refer all to the *eudoxia*, or good Pleasure of God. Not that this good Pleasure of God is any capricious Resolution of his, but a wise Determination of his Will, grounded upon just Reason, altho' unknown to us. Nay, I doubt not, but we Men in another World shall be able to give an Account of many Difficulties in God's *beneficent* and *vindictive* Providence, which in this World are so apt to amuse us; and that in the great Circles and Revolutions of God's future Dispensations, all the present Inequalities shall be made up, and all Accounts balanced. But after all, the Order of the Universe alone is a sufficient Reason to satisfy all reasonable Men of the Wisdom and Justice of God, in placing Men and Things in a better or worse Station in the World, and in communicating to them greater or lesser Benefits. If all were to enjoy the same Favours of the Deity, there would be no Subordination of Beings, which is the great Beauty of the Universe;

there would be only one confused Heap of good Things without Order or Design, which would be so far from being an Argument of the divine Wisdom, that it would be a considerable Proof against it. Besides, no one would praise God for the Benefits they enjoy, if all enjoy'd the same in common with them; for the Universality would take off the Edge of Men's Admiration, and consequently of their Gratitude; and they would be as listless to give Thanks to God in this Condition, as they are to thank God for Health or Wealth, as when they never experienced either Sickness or Poverty. And therefore as God has wisely contrived it in his *natural* and *political* Providence, for the Beauty and Order of the Universe, that some Beings should be *Vegetables*, as well as others *Animals*; that some should be *Brutes*, and others *Men*; and among Men themselves, that some must be Poor, as well as others Rich; that some must labour, as well as others govern: so likewise in his *spiritual* Providence, or in his Care of the everlasting Welfare of Men's Souls; it is no Wonder, that God should ordain several Classes or Orders of future Happiness, or should be more or less bountiful to them, in affording them Means in this World of attaining it.

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tended.

4. And as for the *Jews*, whom you do not think to be such fit Objects of the divine Favour, in communicating to them his revealed Will, as the *Greeks* or *Romans*; that is a Point, I am afraid, you will never be able to make out. Indeed it is grown a mighty Fashion of late, even among those that are better Friends to Christianity than you, to cast very severe Reflexions upon the Jewish Institution; and, under Pretence of shewing the Nobleness of the Christian Religion, do upon all Occasions be-devil the poor *Jews*. I do not think this the best Way to support Christianity, by undermining the Foundation which it is built upon; for the Law is but the Ground-work of the Gospel; and if we destroy the first, the latter falls. And as for the People of the *Jews*, which of late are so much used to be vilified, I do not find that they are more liable to Censure of this Nature than other Nations;

tions. It cannot indeed be denied, but that this People were prone to Idolatry, and did very often lapse into it; which is the Occasion of those very severe Reprehensions you meet withal in the Prophets, and which you hinted at just now. But then this is in some Measure to be palliated by the mighty Grandeur and Pageantry of the idolatrous Worship of all the Nations round about them, and the great Scorn and Reproach which was cast upon the Jewish Singularity in the Worship of one God, which must needs have no inconsiderable Influence upon vulgar Minds. And as for their Aversion to a Familiarity with the Heathens, it was but a Practice agreeable to the Mosaic Law (*Vid. Deut. vii.*) which was a wise Command of God, which alone preserved his true Worship, in that Nation only, free from the Infection of idolatrous Nations round them, for so many Ages together. And altho' perhaps in the Times of *Trogus* and *Tacitus*, the Jews might be more scrupulous this Way, than their Law required; yet that must be imputed to Pharisaism, which was the prevailing Sect among the Jews at that Time, and which by false Glosses and superstitious Doctrines, had perfectly debauched the Jewish Religion, and soured the greatest Part of them into an unsociable Temper. But after all the Faults that may be charged upon them, the stedfast Worship of the One true God, for so many Ages in that Nation only, when all the World besides was overrun with Polytheism and Idolatry, when they were so much scorned and vilified by the Heathen World for his Sake, underwent so many Captivities, Persecutions, and Martyrdoms; this was enough to endear them above the rest of the World to God Almighty, to incline him to commit his *Oracles* to them alone, and to guide them by his revealed *Word*, rather than to the *Greeks* or *Romans*, or any other idolatrous Nation, who, besides their diabolical Superstitions, were ten times more lewd and debauch'd.

5. As for a few scandalous Reflexions which are usually brought against the Jews out of *Justin* and *Tacitus*, I think nothing in them is worthy being taken notice of, unless it be the Disingenuity of the Relators, who, I am

confident, report Things which they themselves do not give the least Credit to. For why, I pray, are not the Holy Scriptures and *Josephus*, that are the Books of that Country, fitter to be relied upon, than the mistaken Reports of malicious or half-informed Foreigners? I beseech you, Sir, where would you look for a true Account of the Matters of *England*, in *Cambden*, *Speed*, and *Baker*, Men of our own Nation, or in Monsieur *Sorbiere* of *France*? I think the Question is easily resolved; and then why should you take these scandalous Accounts of the Jewish Nation from *Justin* and *Tacitus*, when you have Writers of their own Nation, which give contrary Accounts of them? Both of these Heathen Authors are notoriously mistaken in their Account of the Jews; but because *Justin* gives the fullest Account, be pleased to observe one or two of the Absurdities of his Relation. It is plain, that the Foundation of *Justin's* Relation was out of the Book of *Gensis*, by the Names of *Abraham*, *Israel*, the particular History of *Joseph**^{*}, the Envy of his Brethren, his Interpretation of Dreams, his being sold *peregrinis Mercatoribus*, to foreign Merchants, his Prediction of the Famine, his Familiarity with *Pharaoh*, his Storing of the Corn, and the like. Now it is impossible, that such a particular Account should be had any where else, than from the Bible. The Bible therefore must by you Theists be allow'd to have so much of the Truth of profane or secular History, as to regulate *Justin's* History, who seems plainly to have copied either at first or second Hand from it. So that if there be any Truth in *Justin*, the same must be more express in the Bible, from which *Justin* had his Relation, tho' he has blended it with other Fables.

* Minimus ætate inter fratres Joseph fuit, cuius excelleas ingenium veriti fratres clam interceptum peregrinis mercatoribus vendiderunt, à quibus deportatus in Ægyptum, cum magicas ibi artes solerti ingenio percepisset, brevi ipsi regi percharus fuit. Nam & prodigiorum sagacissimus erat, & somniorum primus intelligentiam condidit; nihilque ei divini juris humanique incognitum videbatur, adeo ut etiam sterilitatem agrorum ante multos annos providerit: periissetque omnis Ægyptus fame; nisi monitu ejus rex edicto servari per multos annos fruges jussisset. *Just. Lib. 36. Cap. 6.*

Nor is it difficult to think, how a Heathen should come at a Sight of that Book, or at least a Relation out of it. For *Trogus Pompeius*, who wrote the History which *Justin* epitomized, was a Retainer in the Family of the great *Pompey*, who conquered *Judea*; and therefore in the Expedition of his Master there, without Doubt he picked up this imperfect Relation of the *Jews*, either by reading their Books, and afterwards forgetting or mistaking them; or by mixing the true History, with the fabulous Reports of some neighbouring Gentiles. So that, in short, the Scripture-History must regulate his Report; and then see how finely this does agree with it. He makes the Jewish Original to be from *Damascus*, and that *Abraham* was King of that Place; where *Aratbe*, the Wife of *Syras*, one of their ancient Kings, was worshiped: That after *Damascus*, who gave Name to the City, succeeded *Azelus*, and then *Adores*, and then *Abraham* and *Israel*, which *Israel* divided his Kingdom among his ten Sons, but made them all to be called *Jews* from his Son *Judah*: That *Joseph* was *Israel's* youngest Son, and that *Moses* was Son to him: That the *Jews* were driven out of *Egypt* for being scabby; that they were followed after by the *Egyptians*, because they had stol'n some of their *Sacra*, and that the *Egyptians* were forced to return Home by a Tempest: That they were forced to fast seven Days in the Desarts of *Arabia*, which occasioned the Institution of the Sabbath: That the Memory of their being drove out of *Egypt* for their Scabbiness, made it a Part of their Religion not to converse with Strangers, lest the Knowledge of their Infirmitiy should render them contemptible: That *Moses's* Son's Name was *Arvas*, (i. e.) *Aaron*, who was an *Egyptian* Priest, who afterwards succeeded *Moses* in the Kingdom; and from hence came the Custom, that the Jewish Kings were always Priests.

Now what a foolish and contradictory Account of the Jewish History is this Report of *Justin*? Who ever heard of the Names of *Azelus* and *Adores* in the Jewish Story? When was such a Goddess as *Aratbe* worshiped generally by the *Jews*, who were always fam'd for the Worship

ship of one God? Where, by the Way, this is only a simple Mistake of the Author, to say *Arathe* for the *Astarte*, or *Astaroth*, of the *Sidonians*. Here is again *Abraham* mistaken for the Father, who was the Grand-Father of *Israel*. Here are *Israel's ten Sons* set down for his *Twelve*; his little Estate mistaken for an Empire, and the twelve Tribes for ten Kingdoms. Here is *Joseph* taken for *Jacob's youngest Son*, who was his eldest by another Venter; and *Moses* passes for *Joseph's Son*, who lived three or four hundred Years after him. Here is the Name of *Jews* said to be imposed by *Jacob*, which was not known till the Time of the Captivity, a thousand Years afterwards. Here are the Plagues which *Moses* inflicted upon *Egypt*, altered for the Scabbiness of the *Jews*, as if those heavy Judgments came only by Infection; and the spoiling of the *Egyptians* of their *Bracelets, Ear-rings, &c.* turned into the running away with their *Sacra*. Here is the History of the Manna and Quails confounded with the Institution of the Sabbath; and their Injunction of not communicating with the Nations, attributed to the foolish Fable about their Itch, or Leprosie. And besides, here is again *Aaron, Moses's Brother*, mistaken into his Son, and turned from a *Jewish* into an *Egyptian* Priest: Here is the same *Aaron* made King of the *Jews*, who was never otherways than Priest; and that said to be the Original of the Custom of the *Jews* having their Kings their Priests, when never any such Custom obtained among them; but only the Author has blundered the History of the *Maccabees* Government into this Fable. So that, *Philologus*, I would have your Gentlemen for Shame leave off, to abuse the Jewish Nation with false Stories out of Heathen Historians, that knew so very little of their Country, and are guilty of so many Mistakes about it. For in this short Account of *Justin*, you see there are almost as many Mistakes as Words; whether they are wilful and malicious, or no, I shall not determine; but I am sure the Account we find in Scripture, to all reasonable Men, must be ten Times less liable to Exception.

Phil. These are but small Things, *Credentius*, for us to make many Words about ; but I am afraid, your Inspiration-Men are guilty of a very great fundamental Error, in taking that for some supernatural Revelation of God, which is only natural Reason. For I cannot be brought to think, that the Prophets or other Writers of the Bible, which are said to be inspired, had the Mind of God revealed to them, any other Way, than by the common natural Way of Reasoning and Knowledge. For natural Knowledge is but the Revelation of God, wherein God reveals to our Minds the Natures of Things, which were unknown to us before ; so that God may be as well said to speak to us by our Reason, as by the Scriptures ; and natural Knowledge may be allowed to be divine, as proceeding from God, as well as they. And I doubt not, but that it was the Hebrew Way of using the Word *God*, that has betrayed both Jews and Christians into the Fancy of *Inspiration* and *Revelation*, in the modern Sense ; when formerly nothing but pure natural Knowledge was meant by it. For the Hebrews had always a very religious and devout Way of Talking, and attributed almost all natural Actions to God. If they had gotten Money by their Industry, they would say it was given them by God : If they had a good Thought, they would say, God put it into their Hearts, and the like. So a great many other Things were said to be *divine*, or to come from God, which were only natural, not wonderful, or extraordinary. Thus the *Mountains of God* is only another Name for *great Mountains* ; the *Sleep of God* for a *deep Sleep* ; and the *Sons of God*, Gen. vi. are but great Sons or Giants. Now it would be a mad Way of Interpretation, to say all these Things were inspired, because they have God's Name added to them. Therefore why should we suppose, that those Men, who are called Prophets in Scripture, had any divine and supernatural Revelation, only because they are called *the Men of God*, or are said to have the *Spirit of God*? For this is only an usual Hyperbole to denote that they were extraordinary Men, Men of sound Reasoning and notable

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Parts, and exquisitely gifted to move and persuade the People. And this is no more than what the *Greeks* and *Latinis* mean by *Divine* or *Godlike* (*i. e.*) extraordinary: Only because the *Hebrews* made use of *Genitives* instead of *Adjectives*, they called him the *Man of God*, whom the Heathens would have called a divine or extraordinary Man. So when the Prophets are said to have the *Spirit of God*, what need I pray of coining an Inspiration or Revelation of divine Truth, to explain this by? For the Spirit of God has so many Senses, and those so very diverse in Scripture, that I think it is not fair to clap that particular Sense only upon it, which it may but bare possibly signify. Sometimes it signifies only the *Wind*, as *Isa. xl. 7.* The *Ruach*, or *Spirit of the Lord blew upon him*; that is, a very dry and fatal Wind. Sometimes it signifies the *Soul*, as *Job xlvi. 3.* The *Ruach, the Spirit, or Breath of God, is in my Nostrils*. Sometimes it signifies *Life*, as *Ezech. xxxvii. 14. I will give my Spirit to you, and you shall live*: That is, I will recover you, and give you Life or Spirit again. Other Times it signifies *Mercy*, as *Mich. ii. 7.* Is the *Ruach, the Spirit, (i. e.) the Mercy of God streightned?* And the Word *Spirit* it self singly is noted to signify a Temper of Mind, as, *Caleb was of another Spirit, (i. e.) a better Temper than the murmuring Jews, Numb. xiv. 24.* And in other Places of Scripture the *Spirit of Jealousy, the Spirit of Meekness, the Spirit of Holiness, &c.* all which signify Tempers and Dispositions of Mind.

From all which I conclude, that when in Scripture the Prophets are said to have the Spirit of God; the Meaning is only, that they have great *Minds*, or Spirits, or extraordinary holy Dispositions, above the rest of the People. Which Expression signifies no more in Hebrew, than what the *Greeks* mean when they say the same of a brave Poet or Orator, that he has in his Writings *τέλειον*, some Thing divine and admirable, and far above the Rate of common Authors. So that when by these Passages of Scripture, it will appear, That the Prophets were good solid Writers, and excellent Preachers; why should you

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go about to spoil their Character, and make them only enthusiastical Dreamers? And now, let my Infidelity be as great as you would make it, you see I am a better Friend to your old Prophets, than you your self.

Cred. You have given us here a great deal of learned Banter, and it is great Pity that Men should study Scripture so much, to make such ill Use of it. But to give an Answer to this wild sort of Arguing, which I can hardly persuade my self you urge in earnest;

1. You assert, That natural Knowledge is the Revelation of God, and that the Scriptures have not any more Reason to be called so than that: But this is a great Mistake; for natural Knowledge can't be said properly to be the Revelation, but only the Gift of God. Indeed whatever we know, we should never come to the Knowledge of, unless it had pleased God's Goodness to endow us with these intelligent Faculties; but then no Body says, that God reveals these natural Truths to us, but only he gives us the Faculties of discerning them. Nay, let us be as Platonical as we please, and assert that all the Notions of the Soul, are but so many Intuitions of the Deity, and our viewing some of that Infinity of Truths, which he is pleased to exhibit to us, by communicating himself to us: I say, altho' we explain natural Knowledge this Way, yet this is far from being the same, which we generally understand by *divine Revelation*. For this first is a general Way of God's communicating himself indifferently to all Men; for all Men do indifferently partake of a considerable Measure of natural Knowledge. But this latter Way of God's revealing himself, which in particular we call *Divine Revelation*, is a Favour which God has vouchsafed but to a very few of all Mankind, that they might communicate, what was so revealed to them, to the rest. By the first, Men only have a Power of perceiving the Ideas and Impressions of outward Objects, of compounding and dividing Thoughts, of affirming and denying concerning them, of fitting Premisses, and deducing Consequences; which every one's own Experience tells him he has by Nature. But the latter is a super-

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supernatural Impulse of the divine Power, which instills into Men's Minds Thoughts not attainable by human Reason, or else gives them an Authority, as coming from God, which they had not before. And therefore it is an idle Fallacy, to call those natural Deductions of Reason, and common Ideas of Things, by the Name of Revelation; from which they do as widely differ, as Light and Darkness. This is only a ludicrous Artifice which your Sort of Men have got, of making Use of religious Terms, when you believe nothing of the Thing, and exposing Religion, by leaving nothing in it but a few empty Names. And besides, they have another End to serve by it, which is this, That then their Infidelity does not appear so bare-fac'd when they make Use of the old Terms in an Infidel Sense; for otherways such Writers as *Hobbs*, *Spinoza*, and the Author of the five Letters, would appear so horrid to all Ears that had the least Spark of Christianity left, that Men would be scar'd from them at the first Reading; and so all Hopes of making Proselytes for the Devil would be over. But by this bantering and mincing the Matter, Readers are cajoled into Infidelity unawares, and the Authors escape the Punishment likewise, which would otherwise attend an open and bare-fac'd Blasphemy.

Prophets
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nary Men.

2. And it is much such another Kind of Argumentation, when you would have the Prophets, which are sometimes in Scripture called *the Men of God*, to be only Men of good Parts, and very considerable Men; because forsooth great Things in Scripture are sometimes called by the Name of God. For what tho' the *Mountain of God* be a great Mountain, and *Nimrod* a *Hunter of God*, be a mighty Hunter, may not therefore *Moses*, and *Isaiah*, and *Jeremy*, be inspired Prophets? I pray, where lies the Consequence of this? Indeed if they were only in general said to be *Men of God*, and had no other Title, or no other Demonstration of their prophetick Spirit, there would be then something tolerable in this Argument. But the Name of *Man of God*, is an Expression which is but rarely, but once or twice in Scripture, made Use of to signify

signify a Prophet, *1 Kings*, Chap. xiii. There are other Names which are generally used for that Purpose: Such as *Nabi*, which signifies one that has particular Converse and Familiarity with God, *Gen. xx. 7.* and *Roeh*, *1 Chron. ix. 22.* and *xvi. 28.* and *Chosch*, *2 Sam. xxiv. 11.* *1 Chron. xxi. 9.* both which Words signify *Seers*, as denoting Men that are accustomed to *divine Visions*, or supernatural *Revelations*.

But besides, there are such innumerable Expressions in Scripture, which demonstrate a particular Revelation from God Almighty, and a peculiar Intercourse of these holy Men the Prophets with him, that no reasonable Man can deny it, unless at the same Time he denies the Authority of the holy Scripture, and makes it altogether an Imposture, *Gen. xv. 1.* *The Word of the Lord came to Abram in a Vision, saying, Fear not, Abram, &c.* Now what tolerable Sense can be put upon these Words, but only that this was a particular Revelation of God to *Abraham*? You can't say that this is only some remarkable Saying of *Abraham*, and is therefore in the Jewish Phrase called *the Word of the Lord*: For here is no Room for any such Kind of Metaphor. Here is a particular Dialogue of God and *Abraham*: God said, *Fear not, Abram, I am thy Shield, and thy exceeding great Reward.* And *Abram* said, *Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the Steward of my House is this Eliezer of Damascus?* Then, *v. 4.* is related the Reply of God Almighty: *And behold the Word of the Lord came unto him, saying, This shall not be thy Heir, but he that shall come forth out of thine own Bowels, &c.* Now what can be more positive and express of *Abraham's* immediate Revelation and Intercourse with God, than this Relation? So again, *Exod. ii. 5.* The Revelation made to *Moses* is related as expressly; *God called unto him out of the midst of the Bush, and said, Moses, Moses.* Then follows the Answer of *Moses*. *And Moses said, Here am I.* *And the Lord said, I have surely seen the Affliction of my People, &c. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh.* And *Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring*

bring the Children of Israel out of Egypt? And God said, Certainly I will be with thee, &c. And after this Rate the Dialogue continues the full Length of the Chapter. Now if this be not a Relation of an Intercourse with God, and a Revelation from him, there is no Sense to be put upon any Words, tho' ever so plain; there must be no Assent given to the literal Narrations of Thucydides, or Livy; but the Credit of both those Histories may as well be critisised away as this.

So again, as for the other Prophets, when we are particularly told, that the *Word of the Lord came unto them* at such a Time, in such a Manner, in such a particular Year of such a King's Reign, what can possibly be meant less than that God revealed this to them? When they are commanded to take Rolls, and to write, as Isa. viii. 1. and Jer. xxxvi. 2. and the Prophecies so commanded to be written, are there recorded; when every Prophecy begins with the *Word of the Lord*, or *thus saith the Lord*, when in some of them are particular Interlocutions between God and the Prophet; if this be not Revelation, the Prophets who wrote these Writings, must be the greatest Cheats and Impostors in the World, in so often pretending to it, when they had not the least Share of it. But it vexes one to spend Time to answer so simple an Objection, which is worth no one's Notice, but that the great Spinoza has taken so much Pains in it; and other retailing Infidels after him, would seem to do some great Matter with it.

3. Nor are your Criticisms upon the Hebrew *Ruach*, or Spirit, more solid, by which you would pretend that Word does not signify Revelation or Inspiration, but only *Wind*, *Life*, Temper of *Mind*, and the like. But what an unreasonable Mistake is this? I do not deny but that Word in Hebrew has many Significations, as several other Words have in that narrow Language. But then on the other Side, there are a great many Places in the Bible, in which it can signify only *Inspiration* or *Revelation*. What think you of Gen. xli. 38. where Pharaoh says of Joseph, after he had interpreted his Dream, and

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prophesied of the Years of Plenty and Famine, *Can we find such an one as this is, a Man in whom the Spirit of God is?* Certainly by the *Spirit of God* here is meant the Inspiration of God, or there is no Sense at all in it. And so again, *Numb. xxvii. 18. The Lord said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the Son of Nun, a Man in whom is the Spirit, and lay thy Hand upon him;* where by *Spirit* the Chaldee Paraphrase interprets Prophecy. And what else can be meant by that *Spirit of the Lord,* *1 Kings xviii. 12.* which carried *Elijah* from place to place, by which he did such mighty Miracles, and so undauntedly uttered his Prophecies, but only a supernatural Power of God which did continually attend him? And so *Isa. lix. 21.* God tells the Prophet, that it was his Spirit that inspired him with the Words that he spoke. *Saith the Lord, my Spirit which is upon thee, and the Words which I have put into thy Mouth, &c.* And so several Times in *Ezekiel*, *The Spirit of the Lord fell upon me,* *Ezek. xi. 5.* and *the Spirit entered into me,* *Chap. iii. 24.* And often in the Book of *Daniel*, *the Spirit of the holy Gods* is said to be in him, *Dan. iv. 8.* and *ix. 5, 11, and 14.* In short, divine Revelation is all over the Old Testament, called by the Name of *Spirit*; and even that extraordinary Inspiration which was foretold by the Prophet *Joel*, to prevail under the Gospel, is called so likewise: *I will pour out my Spirit upon all Flesh, and your Sons and your Daughters shall Prophesy, your old Men shall dream Dreams, and your young Men shall see Visions,* *Joel ii. 28.* Where you may particularly observe, that the word *Spirit* is joined with Prophecy and Revelation. And upon this Account the Holy Ghost, which was the Giver of these prophetick Gifts, is in the New Testament called *πνεῦμα ἁγίου*, the *Holy Spirit*. And so is divine Revelation among the Heathens called by the same Name. As, *Dii cœptis inspirate meis, and Inspirante Deo.*

It is plain, therefore, that by the word *Spirit* in Scripture, is frequently understood *Divine Revelation*, which is the Effect of the Operation of God's Holy Spirit, conveying to the Minds of several prophetical Men, whom

God has been pleased to chuse many extraordinary Truths, conducive to the Good of his Church. Which is a Thing so frequent and so plain in Scripture, as is not to be bantered away by a little foolish Criticism; and is a Truth never to be shaken, unless the Infidels have Force enough to overthrow the whole Body of the Scriptures.

Phil. Well, we will see, *Credentius*, what we can do as to that Matter, some Time or other. But in the meantime, methinks, you overshoot your selves a little in your Notions of Revelation. For you generally assert, that Revelation is caused by a more immediate and supernatural Application of the divine Spirit, to the Mind of Man, and so does make known to it those extraordinary Truths; which indeed is only a Cast of the Jewish unphilosophical Ignorance. For when they, poor Wretches, could not understand the natural Causes of Inspiration, they were presently for a *δέος ἀπὸ οὐρανοῦ* for calling in God to help out their sorry Philosophy. Every Thing which was a little surprising to them, they must needs attribute to the immediate Act of God, they were every Moment making Mountains as well as Men of God; and according to their Philosophy, an equal Degree of the divine Power was requisite as well to make a great Hunter, as a great Prophet. But if they had understood better the natural Causes of Inspiration, they would never have been guilty of such manifest Absurdities. For that Inspiration which the Jews, and the Christians after them, would needs have proceed immediately from God, is only the Effect of a *vivid Imagination*. For it is not to be thought that the Prophets had any more immediate Converse with God Almighty, than other Men; but only they had warmer Heads, a quicker Imagination, and a more lively Fancy. Other Men's Imaginations and Dreams did not leave such deep and lasting Impressions upon their Minds, but were quickly over, and they perceived that they were but Dreams and Fancies: but the prophetick Imaginators had such strong Fancies in their Heads, that were as clear to them as the Representations made by their outward Senses, and they thought they were

were as certain of what they so fancied, as of what they heard or saw.

And 'tis plain from Scripture, that strong Imagination only is the grand Requisite for Prophecy. And upon this Account, without doubt, the Jews will not allow *Solomon* the Gift of Prophecy; for he was a wise Man in whom good Sense and a clear Judgment was prevalent, and therefore he was ill qualified for Prophecy, to which *Fancy* was chiefly requisite. So those famous Men in Scripture, who are renowned for their Prudence *, *He-man*, *Darda*, *Kalchol*, were not Prophets; but on the other side, the Prophets were for the most Part out of the Country People, or Men of no Erudition; or sometimes Women, as *Hagar*, *Abraham's Maid*, had the Gift of Prophecy. For these People having but little Understanding, had stronger Passions, and did abound more in Imagination, than Men who had better Sense, and who governed their Fancies by their Reason.

And that you may understand that Imagination was the Foundation of Revelation, be pleased to consider, that their Prophecies differ'd only by the Diversity of their Imagination, which is a plain Argument, that the one was the Cause of the other. If the Prophet was of a merry cheerful Temper, then Victories and Peace were revealed to him; because Men of that Complexion are apt to entertain their Thoughts with such delightful Subjects. If he was a melancholy Man, then he prophesied only Wars and Judgments, and such other dismal Things, which are usual to go along with such black Thoughts. And so the like Diversity, if the Prophet was addicted to Anger, or Grief, or Pity. And for the Proof of this there is a remarkable Instance in Scripture, 2 Kings iii. 15. The three Kings of *Judah*, *Israel*, and *Edom*, are in a great Strait for want of Water for their Armies, they go and consult *Elisha* the Prophet, and he being very angry at the Sight of his Enemy, the King of *Israel* tells him, if it was not for the Presence of *Jebosophat* King of

* 1 Chron. ii. 6. 1 Kings iv. 31.

Judah, he would not look toward him, nor see him. Now he could not Prophesie any Thing that was pleasing to them, whilst his Choler was so high. And therefore he very prudently desires that a Minstrel should be brought him : *And when the Minstrel played, the Hand of the Lord came upon him :* That is, the Musick put him in a good Humour, and then he was inclined to imagine as pleasant Things as the Kings would have him.

So when *Moses* was angry with *Pharaoh*, he had revealed to him the miserable Slaughter of the *Egyptian* First-born, *Exod. xi.* So God was revealed to *Cain* when his Reason was over-clouded with Passion, when *he was very wroth, and his Countenance fell*, *Gen. iv. 5.* When *Ezekiel* was impatient with excessive Anger, (for the Text says, the *Spirit lifted him up in Bitterness, and in the hot Anger of his Spirit*, *Ezek. iii. 14.*) then he Prophesies the Miseries and Stubbornness of the Jews.

So *Jeremy* was always a melancholy Man, and weary of his Life, and therefore he does nothing but Prophesy dreadful Calamities, which should besal the Jews ; and upon this account King *Josias* would not consult him, but chose rather to consult *Hulda* the Prophetess, who being a Woman had more tender Passions, and to whom it was more fit that the Mercy of God should be revealed. Nay, oftentimes Revelation does proceed from the strong, though false Opinions of Men.

Thus King *Nebuchadnezzar's* Augurs prophesy of the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, by looking into the Entrals of Beasts, and by divining with Arrows, *Ezek. xxi. 21.* And thus the Nativity of Christ was revealed to the Magicians, *Mat. xi.* who believed the Fooleries of Astrology, under the Imagination of a Star, which they supposed to have arisen in the East.

So that, in short, this prophetick Imagination was a very good Way of recommending Religion to the Jews, who were a very ignorant People, and were more wrought upon by these fanciful Representations of God made by the Prophets, the Descriptions of his feigned Appearance, Interlocution, Promising, Threatning ; than by any just

and philosophical Discourses of Virtue and Vice, which should be made to them.

Not but that natural Knowledge does include more Certainty than this imaginary Prophecy, only this latter serves better for the Use of less inquisitive Men. For *natural Knowledge* brings Self-Evidence with it, but *Revelation* requires always a *Sign*, or reputed Miracle, which the Prophets were forced to make use of as the Credentials of their Prophecy. Indeed *Revelation* may have something in it of a moral Certainty, that the Men who pretend to it are honest, well-meaning Men; and that the Matter, which they speak, is designed for the bettering of Mankind, and the reclaiming them from their Vices: But I think there is little Evidence concerning it, that it proceeds immediately from God, and that it may not proceed from natural Causes, as I think, I have already sufficiently shewed it to have done. Therefore I wonder, *Credentius*, that a Man of your Sense should have recourse to occult Qualities, and an omnipotent Power to explain Matters, which you see might be accounted for, by such an easy Cast of your Philosophy.

Cred. For my Part, Sir, I do not care to make use of my Philosophy to dispute away my Religion; nor do I see any Reason, why Men should use so much Industry and Artifice to prove, that *Revelation* does not proceed from God; when wise Men in all Ages have ever allowed it. Read but *Jamblichus's Book of Mysteries*, and *Tully de Divinatione*, and you will see the Opinion of those wise Heathens, that the divine Nature has revealed it self to Mankind, and that a Prescience of future Things can come no other Way than by a Revelation from God. And hear how admirably *Socrates* in * *Xenophon* (as well as a Heathen could be expected) Reasons of these Matters. *Of all these Predictions, to refer none to the Revelation of God, but only to human Prudence, is* (says he) *saiuovāv, to be perfectly Mad. That in those Things which are obscure to us, we should consult the Gods by Divination, for they make*

*That Pro-
phecy doth
not con-
st in Imagi-
nation.*

* Xen. Memorabil. Lib. 1.

known those Things to them, to whom they are propitious. Indeed I think it but a vain Attempt to go to prove to you, that Imagination is not the Cause of Inspiration : For I do not suppose that in reality you do believe it ; only by this odd Sort of disputing, you endeavour to make our Religion stand upon as loose a Bottom as you can, that you may be able to overthrow it at your Leisure. For I dare say, you do not believe a Word of Revelation at all, and therefore why should you trouble your self about the Causes of it ? All that you and your Master *Spinoza* mean, when you talk of Prophecies consisting in lively *Imagination*, is, that the inspired Prophets were only a Parcel of melancholy, crack-brain'd, enthusiastical Folks, that preached to the People of *Judea* a Number of phanatical Dreams and Visions. But because there is so much Pains taken in this Argument, I will shew you, that the Prophets, or inspired Men of Scripture, were not Men of this Complexion, as you contend for, and that the Instances which you have alledged, make nothing for this Opinion.

Prophets
not Melan-
choly.

1. For it does not appear, that the Prophets were more Melancholy or Fanciful than other Men are. And it is but a Fancy of Monsieur *Petit*, *de Sibyllis*, Lib. 1. to assert, that Melancholy was the chief Disposition to make a Prophet ; and that *Moses* was an extraordinary melancholy Man, because he chose to live a solitary Life in the Wildernes, feeding his Father-in-law *Zethro's* Sheep ; and because he is noted in Scripture to be slow of Speech, Exod. iv. 10. For these do not appear to be any Arguments at all of Melancholy. For a Pastoral Life does by no Means denote a Man to be of a melancholick Complexion, but contrariwise more debonair and pleasant ; and therefore the Shepherds in polite Nations, as among the *Greeks* and *Romans*, are always described as Men of great Mirth and Jollity, and spending their whole Time in Pleasure and Gaiety. Neither did *Moses* leave the *Egyptian* Court, for a melancholy Retirement in the Country ; but was forced to fly from *Egypt* to avoid the Anger of the King, after it was known, that he had slain the *Egyptian*. Neither, whilst he so absconded,

did

did he shew any Sign of Melancholy there, but only according to the Custom of his Nation, and generally of those Ages, chose to make his Employ the Keeping of Sheep. So that *David*, who is described in Scripture to be of a sanguine Complexion, and famed for sprightly Singing and Playing, may be as well taxed for Melancholy, when he kept his Father's Sheep, as *Moses* might. Neither is the Slowness of his Speech any Argument of his Melancholy, because very sanguine Men are often troubled with that Infirmitiy, which does generally arise from some Defect of the vocal Organs in the Mouth, and not from Men's Complexion and Temper of Mind. And besides, what is commonly translated *Slow of Speech*, is, in the Original, *Heavy*, or *Difficult of Mouth*, which may be any Defect of Speaking, which does render Men less easy to be understood, by Stammering or fast Speaking, as well as slow Speaking. And therefore, *Ezek. iii. 5.* People of another Nation are said to be *heavy of Language*, because they could not be easily understood by the *Jews*. And *Moses* might as well have been very quick in his Talk, and upon that Account mightily given to Hesitation; and then this would rather argue him to be of an eager and volatile Temper, than any Ways given to Melancholy.

But as for all the Rest of the Prophets, it is plain, that they were no melancholy Enthusiasts, because their Discourses and Writings are perfectly different, from what is usually said by that Sort of Men. There is nothing comes from them, but what is grave and sedate, and agreeable to good Sense and Reason, and a well-composed Mind. Do we find any Thing in them, that is like the mad Transports of *James Naylor*? Read but the * Lives of *Sancta Teresa*, and *Maria Magdalena de Pazzi*, and see if the prophetick Writings bear any Manner of Correspondence with their foolish Talk. Did ever any one of the Prophets spend three Years before his Death, in nothing

* Vid. *Dr. Stillingfleet's Fanaticism of the Church of Rome.*
Dr. William's 1st Sermon 1696.

but repeating such an odd Ejaculation, as *thy Will be done in Time and in Eternity*, as Molinus reports of *Gregory of Lopez*? Besides, their Writings are full of just Reasoning, and serious unaffected Relations, which do by no wise agree to Enthusiastical Men. Read but the History of the Pentateuch, and other historical Parts of the Bible, and see if they look like the Compositions of wild Enthusiasts. If *Naylor* had been to write the Book of *Genesis*, he would have made an othergues Spot of Work of it than *Moses* has. He would have clogged every Relation with odd Parenthesisses, [Great is the Lord of Hosts! Judgment! Horror! Desolation! Damnation! &c.] ; he wculd never have kept his Brains close to the Order of a just Narration, but would have jumbled the Creation and the Flood, *Noah*, and *Abraham*, and *Pharaoh*, all together. Do you think that any one of those Popish Dreamers could have made use of such solid Reasoning, and such critical Remarks upon the old Law, as are to be found in the Writings of *St. Paul*, and the Author of the Book to the *Hebrews*? Could they have made such wise Observations upon human Life, and given such Rules of Piety and Conversation, as the Books of *Solomon* are full of? Could they have framed such admirable Forms of Devotion, as the Book of *Psalms*? All that they were able to do, would be to write some mad Stuff, which no Man of Sense would have Patience to read three Leaves of. Had the Scriptures no other Inspiration, than the Imagination of fanciful Brains, there would no one Part of it be coherent with another; History would be clashing with History, and Prophecy with Prophecy, and nothing suit together, with that Order and Symmetry, as now we find it. Ask two craz'd Men in *Bedlam* to tell a Story out of the Bible, and then see how these Men of Imagination will correspond together; talk singly with two Enthusiastical Quakers, till they be warm upon the Book of the *Revelations*, and see then how finely their Prophecies will agree. I am sure they will fall infinitely short, of being so uniformly of a Piece, as the holy Scriptures are. Let the greatest Infidel of you all consider,

der, that wonderful Correspondence there is between the four Evangelists, among themselves, where there is no Difference to be found, but what among Writers, which had not confederated together, should be; and observe the same in the Books of *Kings* and *Chronicles*. See how the same great Design is visible throughout the *Mosaical* Writings, the Prophets, and the Gospel. How exactly does the Lapse of Mankind, by *Adam*, agree with the Reparation made by Jesus Christ? How does the old *Levitical* Law plainly appear, to be but the Sciography, or rough Draught of the Gospel, and the Characters and Lines of one exactly visible in the other? For my Part, I think it impossible for so many, tho' judicious and wise Men, without Assistance from God, to carry any one Design with that Exactness that the Penmen of the Holy Scripture have: But I am sure it is the greatest of Absurdities to assert, that such a noble and uniform Design should be carried on, through so many Ages, by a Parcel of wild Enthusiasts. So that let the Writers of the Bible be what you please to style them, either inspired Men, or Impostors, I shall not dispute that now, they must needs be Men well in their Wits; and what is more, Men of good Sense.

2. It is very evident from Scripture, That Prophecy ^{Prophets} proceeded from another Cause, *viz.* the Influence of ^{had the In-} God's holy Spirit. The innumerable Instances in Scrip-^{spiration of}
ture of the Prophets and Apostles being in the Spirit, of the Holy Ghost.
the Spirit's coming upon them, of their speaking Things *by Command,* and *of the Lord,* *of their being caught up into Heaven,* &c. are undeniable Proofs of the Cause of their *Revelation,* *viz.* the Holy Ghost, or the Spirit of God. Indeed it is not easy, to give a philosophical and notional Account of this supernatural Influence, or by what Means it was conveyed, or by what Criterion, or Marks, they could distinguish it from a Delusion; because we who are not honoured with these supernatural Gifts, can have no Idea of these Things, as having never been the Objects of our Understandings: But it is *not to be doubted,* *but these holy Men had as absolute Certainty*

Certainty of the Truth of them, as we have of Things that do immediately strike our Senses, and did as perfectly know them to be the Word of God, as that those Things are, which we see to be, and that they could as little question their Inspiration, as we do our Senses. For as the Senses are only the ordinary Way of God's conveying Ideas to us, and these are so clear to us, by their Familiarity and repeated Trials of their Faithfulness, that we cannot but rely upon them, and cannot but give assent to them ; so the Inspiration of God to the Prophets, by their clear Evidence continually, and by their wonted Experience of it, left no more Doubt in them of the Truth of it, than the Appearance of the Sun does leave in us ; that it is Day, or that what we see is really seen by us, and is not the Delusion of a Dream. To say we ordinary Persons can have no Notion of this extraordinary Influx of God, and therefore it cannot be, is only to expose our own Ignorance ; and a blind Man might with as much Modesty pretend to demonstrate against the Existence of Colours, or a Clown laugh at mathematical Theorems, as we pretend to dispute against the Certainty of this supernatural Influence, which God Almighty has been pleased to give us no Notices of. Might not God Almighty as well have given us ten Senses as five ? And if he has been pleased to make an extraordinary Impression upon some Men's Minds, which he does not on all, must we therefore assert this as impossible ; because we, who do not experience it, do not perceive it ? Must all Men be Blind, because we are so ? Or must every Man be Mad and Enthusiastical that hath better Eyes than we ? I am sure this is a very mad Way of Arguing ; and yet there is no more Reason for Men to question the Truth of the Revelation of the Prophets, than blind Men have to question our Sight. Nay, the miraculous Power which did usually attend Prophecy, was more undeniable Evidence to the Beholders of their divine Influence, than the joint Assertion of the Generality of Mankind can be, that there is such a Thing as *Sight* or *Colours* to a blind Man ; because *Sensation* is a greater Degree of Evidence,

than

than Testimony ; and because a Man will sooner believe his Senses than a thousand Witnesses. A blind Man cannot believe there are Colours but only by being told so ; but when I see a Prophet, doing Miracles, I am sure he is influenced by God, because I see he does Works above the Power of Nature.

3. You are very much mistaken, when you assert that Prophecy is inconsistent with Wisdom, and that Men of good Sense, such as *Solomon*, *Kalkol*, *Heman*, &c. were no Prophets, but only poor Shepherds, Women, and other Persons of mean Parts were endowed with that Gift. One would wonder how Men could lay down an Assertion, which is so easy to be confuted as this is. Pray what must be thought of *Moses*, of whom 'tis said, *there arose not since in Israel a Prophet like him?* (Deut. xxxiv. 10.) Does his noble Genius, his invincible Courage, his sagacious Prudence, his vast Depth in Philosophy, argue him a Man of mean Parts ? Methinks the Heathen *Longinus's* Character of him, that he was *ανὴρ εὐχών*, No mean Man, should be enough to free him, at least, from his Share in this Calumny. What do you think of *Nathan*, *Isaiah*, and *Daniel*, who were bred up Courtiers, and made a great Figure in the Ages, when they lived, and the Writings of two of them shew them to be Men of fine Parts ? But, I think, you have a little outshot your self, in the Instance of *Solomon*, in denying him to be a Prophet. For it is recorded in Scripture, that God revealed himself twice unto *Solomon*, First at his Entrance upon his Kingdom, when he asked Wisdom of God, 2 Chron. i. 8. Secondly, upon his finishing the Temple, 2 Chron. vii. 12. Nay, what do you think of *David*, who was a Prophet as well as a King ? And as for your Instances of *Kalkol*, and *Heman*, those great Masters of Musick, as if they were Men of too good Sense to be Prophets ; if you please to turn to 1 Chron. xxv. 5. you shall there find, that one of them, viz. *Haman*, is there expressly called the *Kings Seer, or Prophet.*

Prophecies
not variable
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to the Pro-
phet's Pas-
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4. You lay down also another very false Supposition, That the Prophecies varied always according to the different Passions and Dispositions of the Prophets, and therefore would hence conclude, that their Prophecy was only *Imagination*. But this is very False, and very Illogical. First, it is False : For *Moses*, who is characterised to be the meekest of all Men, did prophesie as dreadful Judgments against the *Israelites*, as any of the Prophets, *Vid. Lev. xxvi. 14.* *Isaiah's* Prophecy is in the several Places very different ; sometimes he prophesies joyful, at other times very dismal Things. And even *Jeremiah*, the most mournful Prophet of all, does foretel the *Jews* joyful Deliverance from their Captivity, as well as the Captivity it self. And *Daniel* at that very Time, when he was mourning and fasting in Sackcloth and Ashes, had revealed to him by the Angel *Gabriel* the joyful Coming of the Messias, with all the Benefits which should follow from him. Secondly, there is no Consequence in the Argument, if the Supposition were true. For if God did so far comply with second Causes, as some Times to co-operate with them, it does not follow that those Causes could produce a supernatural Effect of themselves. Tho' God should pick out merry Men to foretel joyful Things, and melancholy one's to foretel sad one's ; it does not follow that either merry or melancholy Men could foretel any Thing without the Assistance of God : Because Prediction is the Effect of divine and infinite Knowledge, and not of bodily Temperament : It would be still the Gift of God, tho' such Qualifications were necessary for the receiving it.

5. As for your Instances of some Men's being under some Passions, at the Time of their Revelation, and therefore they must be the Cause of it. This is an Argument with a Witness. What tho' *Elisha* called for a Minstrel, must therefore Mirth be the Cause of Prophecy ? I suppose the Reason why he called for it, was to compose his Spirits, which were ruffled at the Presence of a wicked King ; and it was therefore proper to render his Mind sedate, before he presumed to offer up his Petitions to God,

God, for the prophetick Influence of his Spirit. What tho' *Moses* did predict the Slaughter of the *Ægyptian* First-born, when he was angry with *Pharaoh*, must Anger be the Cause of Prophecy? Indeed angry Men may wish Ill, but they seldom, I think, prophesie it; for if they did, the World would be in a sad Condition. But, I think, *Moses* brought it to pass too; so that it appears there was something more in this heavy Judgment than a little *Scolding Threatning*, which you Theists make of the rest of the Prophecies. *Cain was wroth* when God spake to him; but in those ancient Times, God was wont to reveal himself to Mankind in other Tempers. And when *Ezekiel* is said to be *in the hot Anger of his Spirit*, before his Prophecy, this must not be understood of natural Anger, but only the violent Exagation of the Spirit in him. *So the Spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in Bitterness, and in the Heat or Anger of my Spirit; but the Hand of the Lord was strong upon me.* Which is a most lively Description of the Operation of the prophetick Spirit in the Body of the Prophets, with all his Struggles and Reluctancies under it. 'Tis a Metaphor taken from a hot fiery Horse, that struggles and contends, and is impatient under the Bridle of his Rider. It is a Description not unlike that of *Sibylla in Virg. Æn. 6.*

*At Phœbi nondum patiens immanis in antro
Bacchatur Vates, magnum si pectore possit
Excessisse Deum, tanto magis ille fatigat
Os rabidum, fera corda domans, singitque premendo.*

Neither is there any Force in what you say, as to the Distinction which you would have *Josiah* make between *Jeremiah* and the Prophetess *Hulda*; for there is no Doubt to be made; but if *Jeremiah* had been consulted upon the same Point, he would have given the same Answer.

6. But in the next Place, you advance a strange Paradox, when you assert that Prophecy varied according to the idle Opinions of the Prophets, as if King *Nebuchadnezzar's* Diviners, and all the *Perſian Magi*, were true Prophets.

Vain Opinions not mixed with Prophecy.

Prophets. For that Passage in the 21st of *Ezekiel* does not say that those Diviners did truly Prophesie, but only that the King of *Babylon* made use of those Divinatory Arts, the Βελουμαντεια, the Εισωλουμαντεια, and Auruspicy which are there mentioned ; he does graphically describe the Coming of the *Babylonians*, and therefore prophetically relates all the superstitious Rites which were preparatory to that Expedition. And as for the *Persian Magi*, by whom you would have our Saviour's Birth to be revealed, whilst they were looking after their Astrological Fooleries ; I Answer, that by this, God gave no Countenance to any Divination by the Stars, as if there were no more Certainty in divine Revelation, than in this Sort of Fortune-telling, as you would flily insinuate ; but that there being an universal Belief throughout the whole *East*, that some great Man should about that Time be born in *Judea*, as *Suetonius* relates, these *Magi*, or wise Men, took Occasion to travel into *Judea* upon the Appearance of this extraordinary Star, supposing that this might prognosticate something of this great expected Birth. God might take this Occasion to make known the Birth of his Son to the Gentile World, and yet give no Countenance to all the Fooleries of Judicial Astrology. Such an extraordinary Phænomenon as this was enough to awaken the Attention of any inquisitive Men, tho' they were not given to that Superstition, so as to search after the Meaning of it ; whose diligent Endeavours God was pleased to bless with the glad Tidings of the Gospel of Peace, and a Saviour of the World.

7. Besides, I would beg you to consider that there is something more in Prophecy than *Fancy* and *Well-meaning*. The Prophets were something better than religious Madmen. They generally had a Foundation of good Sense and a learned Education, being, for the most Part, brought up in the Schools of the Prophets, whereof one is mentioned at *Naoth* in *Ramah*, where *Samuel* lived, 1 Sam. xix. 19. another at *Kiriath Jearim*, 1 Sam. x. 5. Neither was Prophecy among the *Jews*, only the running about the Country, now and then, of a crazed Wretch, as your

People

More in
Prophecy
than Fancy
and Well-
meaning.

People are wont to say ; but in a regular Manner, and a settled Dispensation ; there being great Numbers of the Prophets in that Nation. For even in the most corrupt Times, there were *Fifty of the Sons of the Prophets* together, beholding *Elijah* when he was caught up into Heaven, *2 Kings ii. 7.* and *Obadiah hid an hundred Prophets, fifty in a Cave*, during the Rage of *Ahab's* Persecution, *1 Kings xviii. 4.* Now it is not possible that such a Number of Men so regularly educated, should all be Enthusiastically mad. But I see any Thing can be asserted, to serve a Turn, or to vilify Religion ; sometimes God's Ministers must be mad Fools, at other Times cunning Knaves, tho' methinks the *Priest-craft*, which you are so often upon, and *Madness*, do not so very well agree.

Phil. Come, *Credentius*, we won't make any Words about that Matter now ; for we are now entering upon another Stage of Difficulties, which are so many and so great, that, I am afraid, they will make you sweat under them, before you have got through them. What say you to the Busines of Miracles ? Are not these, think you, pretty Things to cheat the Mob with ? But I am afraid they will never stand the Test of Philosophy and Reason. One would wonder how such nonsensical Notions as these should come into the World ; but considering the Stupidity of them, one might guess them to be of Jewish Original. For probably when the first *Jews* saw the neighbouring Gentiles worshiping the *natural Gods*, as Sun, Moon, Earth, Water, &c. they to shew these constant mutable and visible Gods, to be under the Dominion of their *Jehovah* or Invisible one ; began to brag of the Miracles which they pretended *Jehovah* had done by triumphing over poor Nature for their dear Sake, for whom they were fond to believe all Things were made. Thus this Notion got from the *Jews* to other Nations, and so they have been coining Miracles ever since. But really, Sir, a Miracle in your Sense, is Nonsense. For you suppose something above the Power of Nature, which is the greatest and highest Power in the World. For the Power of Nature is the Power of God. *Nature* is one, eternal, fixt,

fixt, immutable Chain, which is infinitely drawing out and expanding it self, and not capable of the least Alteration : Now if it was possible (as you suppose) by a Miracle that one Link of this, should be disturbed or broken, the whole Frame of Nature would be confounded, and the whole Scheme of future Beings would be infinitely irregular. Nature is the eternal Will and Decree of God, executing it self, and the Will of God is his very Essence ; however it is firm and immutable, nay impossible to be changed by the contrary Will of God himself : and therefore we may be sure, it is not to be interrupted by the *Hocus Pocus* of every capricious Prophet. And indeed Miracles are nothing else but the Dreams of block-headed Brains, or a ready Solution of what the uneducated Mob are wont to gape at, and can give no Account of ; so that I doubt not, but that a common Almanack-maker that could calculate an Eclipse, or write it out of an Ephemeris, would be a most wonderful Prophet among the *Indians* ; but when these People, by liberal Education, come to understand the exact Motions of the heavenly Bodies, the Miracle would be at an End : Nay, any Thing that is unusual is by the Vulgar reputed a Miracle, because *forsooth they admire it, tho' it be never so natural* ; but it ceases to be a Miracle, when their Admiration is wrought off. Thus a Comet is to them a most wonderful Miracle, because it appears but now and then in a great many Years : But the Sun is no Miracle at all, because they see it every Day ; not that they understand the Nature of the Sun better than that of a Comet, but by continually beholding it ; it does not make so great Impression upon their Fancies, and therefore they cease to admire it. And I doubt not but this is the true Reason of most of the reputed Miracles of Scripture, which are but the unusual Works of Nature, which would necessarily have been for all any inspired Person ; but only, they being uncommon Works of Nature, the Vulgar wondred at them, and deemed them Miracles. O ! but we must have a Care of exploding Miracles, because they do demonstrate the Being of a God ; and very lamely too. For the necessary

Laws of Nature, and the Frame of the World, are a thousand Times more demonstrative of it. For Miracles, or Interruptions in Nature, make wise Men rather doubt of it, and seem rather fortuitous Blunders, than the wise Works, or Efflux of the Deity. Nay, what Proof is there by Miracles of any Thing else, or that any Doctrine came from God? For the Jewish Law allows, that Miracles might be done by false Prophets, as appears by *Deut. xiii. 1.*

If there arise among you a Prophet, and giveth thee a Sign or Wonder, and the Sign or Wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other Gods, &c. You shall not hearken unto the Prophet, for the Lord your God proveth you. Nay, what were the Jews the better for all the Miracles they had among them, supposing they were true? Moses with all his Miracles was not gone from them but a few Days, but they were turned as arrant Heathens as any in the World, and fancying the Image of God into the Figure of a Calf. Nay, for all Miracles and Inspirations, the great *Solomon* himself was a downright *Epicurean*, and imagined all Things to come by Chance, *Eccl. iii. 19, 20.*

Cred. By your Leave, good *Philologus*; you have heaped here together so many Falsities, or Mistakes, that I am forced to interrupt you, before you go any farther.

1. I pray what Reason have you to think that the Notion of Miracles had its Origin from among the Jews? Had not the *Greeks* and *Romans*, in the earliest Time, before they ever consoled with the Jews, the same Notions? What more common in *Homer* and *Virgil* than strange Prodigies, which are wont to amaze whole Armies, till they be unriddled, and rendered favourable by some Augur? What more usual in Greek and Latin Authors, than *tegla, Ostenta, Portenta, Miracula?* And you may see a whole Chapter of several of these Miracles collected together in *Valerius Maximus*, and a great Deal of the same in *Plutarch*. Inquire of any barbarous Nations in the World, and you shall find, that they have the same Notion of Miracles, tho' they never heard of the Jews. For our No-

tion of Miracles, that it is the *extraordinary Power of God*, or a Power above Nature, is natural and easy to the Minds of all Mankind; but that a Miracle should be the *necessary Power of un-wanted Nature*, is only a Dream of the *Hob-bian Philosophy*, that few People who are awake, think of.

No immutable Chain of Nature. 2. Neither is it any good Argument against Miracles, that they would break your fixt and immutable Chain of Nature which you contend for. For there is no Proof that there is any such fixt immutable Chain; for if there was, there would be no such Thing as Freedom, either in God, or Man, but all Things would be bound up by a rigid Fate, of which every Word we speak, or Action which we do, is a sufficient Confutation. Now either this fixt immutable Chain of Causes is God himself, or the Creature, or Work of God. That it is not God himself, I think I have sufficiently evinced, in a * former Discourse, with you; from the Absurdities which would follow, by allowing in God all the Imbecillities, Vices, and Irregularities in Nature, which are inconsistent with his infinite Perfection. And the Freedom of Man, the spontaneous Actions of Brutes, and the Alterations and Changes in the inanimate Parts of the World, are sufficient Arguments against the latter. Now if the World be the Creature of God, as we have proved it to be, then it must be subject to his Power and Providence. For God's Creation supposes it subject to his Power; for what is not subject to the Power of God, must have a greater Power of its own to resist his Power. But this is impossible for the World, or Nature to have, because all the Power which they can possibly have, they had from God in their Creation. Therefore God still keeps the Power over them, either to annihilate them, to continue them in their Being, or to alter them. To say that God has alienated this Power, or given them a greater, is more absurd. For this is in Effect to say, God has divested himself of his Deity, and made the World God instead of himself. All that can, with any Probability, be said, is, That God, by the Frame and Constitution of the World, has been

* Conference with a Theist. Part I.

pleased to make it immutable ; and therefore this Power being passed out of his Hands, he cannot recal it, without Violation to his Wisdom, and a perfect Confusion to the present Scheme of Beings. But to consider this a little. As God by his omnipotent Power created all Things, so by his Providence he governs them, and takes care of them. And it is equally Absurd to say any Thing should not be governed by *infinite Providence*, as to assert any Thing might be created without *omnipotent Power*. Both these are God's Attributes, and to do Violence to either of these is injurious to God. Now how can it be said, that God by his Providence takes care of the World, when he has made such a fatal unalterable World that it is out of his Power to take care of ? For whatsoever is governable, or the Subject of Government, must be in one's Power, and alterable : But God can no more govern a fatal World, than a Man can govern the Winds and the Sea. But to govern and take care of his Creatures, is the necessary Attribute of a wise and a good God ; and therefore the World, which he takes care of, must be governable, and consequently not fatal.

Phil. But by the Way, Sir, is it not more agreeable to the divine Wisdom to create a World fixt and immutable, than such a one whose Laws should be weak and shatter'd, that they must need his Assistance every Moment, to preserve them, and make them go according to his Will ?

Cred. I do not deny but that the Laws of Nature are in themselves sufficiently firm and immutable, and that they will unchangeably preserve their Course, when it does not please God they should be interrupted by his superior Power. But it is no Reflection upon God's Wisdom, that he did not make the World so immutable, that his Providence could not interpose in it : Nay, it would have been a greater Reflexion upon his Wisdom, to have made such a World, which it was out of his Power to controul. Let any one judge, if a Prince does not act more prudently by granting a limited Commission to a General and Deputy to be superseded at his Pleasure, than

*God's Providence
better than
Fatality.*

by granting an absolute and unlimited one, which it is out of his Power to restrain.

Phil. This is true among Princes, because they have a finite Understanding, and can have no Knowledge of Futures; and so may undo themselves by not reserving a Power to themselves upon some extraordinary Emergency; but God Almighty knows all Things, because he eternally Decrees them: And therefore nothing can happen afterwards unexpected, or contrary to his Foresight; and therefore he might very well compose a fixt and immutable World, without any Prejudice to himself, or Reflexion upon his Wisdom.

Cred. Tho' we must not consider God as a finite Governor, yet we must consider him as a wise Governor; and he cannot be a wise Governor by fatal Laws: For the Laws of Virtue, which are certainly God's Laws, suppose Liberty; but to command a Thing to be freely done, which cannot but be done, or is impossible to be done, does argue a foolish Governor; and therefore God cannot do so. God must therefore reserve to himself the continual Management of the Affairs of Nature to maintain the Freedom of Man's Will; and to adjust Matters so as becomes a good Governor. But to go on where we left of.

Miracles
or Occurrences,
which the
Vulgar do
not understand.

3. It is another of your great Mistakes to assert, That Miracles are only such Occurrences in Nature as the Vulgar do not understand. For generally the Miracles which are recorded in Scripture, are such as the Vulgar are as proper Judges of as the greatest Philosophers. Indeed if the Miracles were only some extraordinary Performances in recondit Arts and Sciences, then they would afford some Reason for learned Men, to question their Sincerity. If they were the Resolutions of some very difficult Questions in Algebra, some curious Tables of the Motions of the heavenly Bodies for many Years, some wonderful Performance by mechanick Philosophy, which had amused the common People into the Opinion that they were Miracles; then something of this Nature might be pretended. But when all the Miracles in Scripture are such as the

meanest Men might be Judges of, and which they cannot be deceived in, the Case is quite different. Any ordinary Man might be Judge whether it were not by a miraculous Power, that bitter Waters, by a Word of the Prophet, were made sweet ; that an Iron Hatchet was made to swim ; that a dead Child was raised to Life. Every ordinary Man was as good a Judge of Taste, of the Heaviness of Iron, and when the Soul was departed from the Body, as the greatest Philosopher. When our Saviour, by a Word spoke, turned Water into Wine, cured the Blind and the Lame, and raised Men from the Dead ; in these Cases the relieved Persons, and every Beholder, could tell that this was above the Power of Nature, as well as those that had continually applied themselves to the Study of it. There is no Need for an Insight in Philosophy, or the Mathematicks, for Men to know when they are sick, or when they are well ; to know, that tho' Physick does often cure diseased Men, yet Words naturally do not ; that medicinal Operations are slow and gradual ; and therefore when they see Men instantaneously cured of a Disease, which for a long while has baffled the Power of Medicine, that this must needs be by a supernatural Power, when they see all natural Means have failed.

4. And your Assertion is equally false, wherein you lay down, That Miracles do rather make Men doubt of a God, than prove his Being to them. Now we do not say, that Miracles are the best Argument to prove the Being of a God, for the most excellent Frame and Contrivance of the World, are the most obvious Proof of it. But Miracles are far from making any wise Man doubt of the Being of a God. For the wise, and constant Ends and Regularities in Nature are so forcible a Proof upon Men of his Being ; that every little Disorder cannot make a wise Man doubt of it. For if I behold in any Work a thousand wise Ends that I am able to discover ; I may very well conclude that a few other Things were as wisely design'd, whose Ends I am not able to guess at. But why should Miracles make Men doubt of the Being of a God ? In my Mind they do plainly prove his Existence.

R. 3

For when ever a Miracle is done, there is something done by a Power superior to Nature: Now if there be a Power superior to Nature, then Nature is not Self-existent, and consequently there is a God which created Nature. This must be Demonstration to all Materialists, that allow nothing in the World but infinite and eternal *Matter*, and a necessary Concatenation of Causes. For if a Miracle or supernatural Power breaks or disturbs one Link of these Causes, and Nature afterwards goes on undisturbedly again, it is most certain that there is a Power above Nature which directs it; for otherways a necessary and fatal Nature would move on with an infinite Disturbance. So that I say, *Philologus*, that tho' to an Epicurean, who would have all Things come by Chance, Miracles are not so good a Proof of a Deity, as the Frame of the Universe, and the wise Ends of Things; yet to a Materialist, who will have all Things to be Nature, the Eviction of a Miracle must be Demonstration: For this overthrows his whole Hypothesis, and tells him, to his Face, that Matter and Nature are but a limited and subordinate Power, and in Subjection to a superior Mind or Power, which is God. Nay, let the Miracle be true or false, either wrought by God, or the Devil, it is home-proof against a Materialist; for a *Witch*, or an *Apparition*, is total Destruction to that Philosophy. Therefore it is no Wonder, that so great an Outcry is raised against Miracles and preter-natural Powers; for if these are once evinced, the *Hobgoblin* is at an End.

False Miracles no Argument against true ones.

5. And whereas you object against Miracles, that they are no Proof of an Inspiration from God, because there may be a great many false Miracles; and that *Moses*, in the 13th of *Deuteronomy*, gives them Warning of the same: I think this is only puzzling the Case, and raising a Dust, instead of arguing the Point. For what though there be false and pretended Miracles, are there therefore no true ones? Because there have been many false Witnesses, must therefore no true Evidence be credited? Because there are very many Quacks and Empiricks, are there no good Physicians in the World? Because there

there are many Knaves, are there no honest Men? This is a mad Way of concluding, which would destroy all human Society and Conversation out of the World. Men must neither eat nor drink, because some Men have been poisoned those Ways. They must receive no good Money, because there is a great deal of Counterfeit. They must believe nothing that is told them; because there are many Liars among Men. Now Man would be the most miserable Creature in the World, if he were to square his Actions by this Method. But God has given to all Men Judgment and Reason to distinguish between Truth and Falshood, between Sincerity and Design. And this we must make use of in considering miraculous Powers, and proving the Spirits whether they be of God. By this we may discern whether the produced Miracle be above the Power of Art or Nature, or whether it does not shew the Finger of God; whether it be the Effect of a deluded Imagination, and not rather the Evidence of clear and undisturbed Sense; whether it be the Operation of God, or the Power of the Devil; whether it tends to the Advancement of the Kingdom of Light, or of Darkness; whether it tends to further moral Goodness and Piety, or else Wickedness and Superstition; whether it contributes to the strengthening or overthrowing of God's Laws; whether it confirms what we are sure God has revealed before, or contradicts it. Now with this Caution we may very well distinguish true from false Miracles, and assent to the True, whilst we reject the False. And therefore *Moses*, in the Chapter which you alledged, does with very good Reason, give the *Jews* Warning that they do not receive Impression from Miracles with too great Precipitancy, and gives them a good Rule to judge when they are false; viz. namely, when they contradict the standing Rules of Morality, or any other Revelation of God. *If there arise among you a Prophet, or a Dreamer of Dreams, and giveth thee a Sign, or a Wonder, &c. saying, Let us go after other Gods, &c. Ye shall not hearken unto the Words of that Prophet, &c. but ye shall walk after the Lord your God, and keep his Commandments, and obey his Voice, &c.*

This is but wise and discreet Caution ; but to condemn all true Miracles for the Sake of some Impostures, is unreasonable Scepticism, and would tend to dispute all Truth and Certainty out of the World, and make all Men turn Pyrrhonicks and Seekers.

*Instances of
the Jews,
and Solo-
mon, con-
sidered.*

6. And it is likewise false, which you in the next Place lay down ; That the Miracles, and Inspiration among the *Jews*, had no Influence upon their Understandings, or Lives, from the Instances of the idolatrous *Jews* in the Wilderness, and King *Solomon*. Indeed I can by no Means excuse the *Jews* for their perfidious Defection to idolatrous Worship, whilst *Moses* was in the Mount ; but yet I cannot go with you so far, as to assert, that the Figure of a Calf was thought, by them, to be the divine Image. For this is such a Grosness as is not to be supposed in human Nature ; it is most probable that they designed this only as an Hieroglyphick, or Emblem of the true God, in Imitation of the *Egyptians*. For as the *Egyptians*, with whom they had long conversed, worshiped their God *Apis*, under the Hieroglyphick of a *Bull*, or *Calf* : So the *Jews*, who loved a pompous ceremonious Worship, thought to worship the true God so too. For it is plain, that they intended to pay their Devotion to the true God, because in the Relation of this Passage, *Exod. xxxii. 4* It is said, This is the *Elohim*, or *God*, which brought thee out of the Land of *Egypt*. Which is more particularly explained in the next Verse, To morrow is a Feast to the *LORD*, or to *Jehovah*. And as for those Places in *Ecclesiastes*, after all that is objected by *Atheists*, and *Socinians*, I do not see any Thing to the contrary ; but that these are only *Protopopœia's* of Epicureans, wherein the Absurdities of these Opinions are exposed, and brought into the Number of those other Vanities, which in this Book he is condemning.

Phil. But after all, *Credentius*, I cannot be persuaded, but that it was the prejudiced Opinions of the unphilosophical *Jews*, and their Pretence more immediately to the divine Protection, which gave Occasion to the Rise of so many Miracles in Scripture which might otherways be

naturally accounted for. It would be too long to run through all the pretended Miracles in Scripture, which I could easily make out to be done by the Power of Nature; I shall only pick out one or two which may serve as a Sampler for the Rest, and may prove, that they all may receive a philosophical Solution. Now, *1 Sam. ix. 15.* God is related to send *Saul* to *Samuel*, but in this Mission there was nothing, but what the Order of Nature did require; for *Saul* at that Time was seeking his Father's Asses. So God is said to send the Locusts as a Plague upon *Ægypt*, of which there was a plain natural Cause, for an East-Wind blew them out of another Country, and a West-Wind carried them back again. So God is said to set the Rainbow in the Clouds, which is produced there by the natural Cause of Refraction. And again, there is a wonderful Miracle related in *Joshua* of the Sun's standing still, and making a long and miraculous Day, when it happened only by the Reflexion of the Sun-Beams on the neighbouring Hills, or the Refraction which was caused by the Air, which at that Time was full of Hail and Snow, as is evident from the great Shower of Hail-stones, which so annoyed the Enemy. Now, these, and such like Miracles, were devised, only to raise the common People's Devotions, and to affect their Fancies, which would not receive an Impression by an ordinary Way of Relation; but when it was said, That God immediately interested himself in such an Action, it made them presently to prick up their Ears, and be very attentive and devout.

Cred. Although it cannot be denied, *Philologus*, but that the *Jews* had a religious Way of talking and attributing to God the ordinary Effects of his Providence, when brought to pass by the most easy and natural Means; yet it is impossible that those supernatural and stupendous Relations, which are to be met with in many Places of Scripture, are to be accounted for this Way. Neither do your Instances, which you have alledged, in any wise prove what you contend for. For as for your Instance of God's sending *Saul*; although *Saul* by the Bent of his

Miracles
not natu-
rally come
to pass.

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own Inclination was seeking his Father's Asses ; yet God by making use of this natural Act of his Will and proper Resolution, brought it to pass, that he should meet the Prophet *Samuel*, who came to anoint him King. For unless you allow that God Almighty has the Power of inclining, over-ruling, and turning to his own proper Ends the Wills and Designs of Men, you must exclude God from having any Thing to do in the Government of the World ; otherways Mankind would be the arbitrary Lords of the whole Creation, and as long as they had a Free-will, (unless opposed by an open and apparent Resistance) they must act in Defiance to their sovereign Lord and Maker. And therefore God in his infinite Wisdom is pleased, to let his Almighty Power mix and blend it self with the natural Actions and Inclinations of Men, that he may gently lead them to the Ends he has proposed, whilst they are seemingly going thither themselves. Which is a great Kindness and Condescension to human Nature, that he will not ruffle and struggle with them, and force them against their Wills to do what he would have them, but only casts such a gentle Influence upon their Minds, that they should do that of their own accord, which he might otherwise have forced them to. 'Tis needless to give a philosophical Account of the divine *Inclination* of the Will, whether it be by exciting new Ideas in the Mind, or reviving old ones, by Reminiscence, or Memory, by raising and settling a keener Edge upon the Passions, by bringing new Objects to the Senses, or engaging them in a nicer Observation : For let the *Modus* of this be how it will, as long as God is the Governour of the World, and does exercise a Providence over his Creatures, some Way or other, he must have an Influence over Men's Wills, tho' at the same Time they seem to make use of them with the greatest Freedom. And this way God Almighty is said to have sent *Saul* to *Samuel*, by gently influencing his Will, and the exterior Objects which inclined it, so as to make him seem to do that of his own proper Motives, which God would have him do. It is not easy to ascertain, where divine Influence

ence gave the first Impression in this Case. It may be probable upon the Fancies of the Cattle, who had some unusual Idea raised in their Imagination, which inclined them to wander, and then it was natural enough for *Saul*, their Master's Son, to pursue them, where he met *Samuel*. So that you see, in this Case, that every Thing worked with its own proper Tendency, but yet all was managed and over-ruled by the Wisdom and Power of God. But as to your Instance in the Rainbow. Now tho' this does proceed from natural Causes, yet it is very properly in Scripture attributed immediately to God. For tho' it is probable, that the Rainbow was antecedent to the Deluge, (there being the Sun and Seas, and consequently Clouds and Rainbows) yet God is very properly said to *set his Bow in the Clouds*: because he set it there for a *Token*, or a *Sign*; altho' it was a *Rainbow*, yet it was not a *Sign* or *Token* before it was a *Rainbow* by the ordinary Course of Nature, but it became a *Token* by God's special Ordinance. And so for the Matter of the Locusts, *Exod. x. 14*. What tho' they came with an East-Wind, and went away with a West? Will the pure blowing of an East-Wind produce Caterpillars? Or supposing them to be blown from another Country, such innumerable Quantities of them, as were never heard of before, so great as utterly to destroy all the Herbage of *Agypt*, were equally, as miraculous, as if there had been an instantaneous Creation of them. And what Reason is there to assert this Plague of *Agypt* to be natural, when all the others are so apparently miraculous? You must either deny the History, or grant the Miracle; for there is no Bantering of all those wonderful and tremendous Plagues with such little Criticisms. And the same I have to say to your Explication of the Sun's standing still in *Joshua's* Time. Now let any reasonable Man consider, if there be any Thing in that Relation which looks like *Spinoza's* Account of the Matter, viz. the Twilight, being at that Time more than ordinary protracted by the Refraction of the Sun-Beams, through the snowy Air. I grant something like this may happen, for a Minute or two; but what is this to the Sun's stand-

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ing still a whole Day? So the Sun stood in the midst of Heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole Day, Josh. x. 13. Nay, tho' we should grant you, what sometimes comes to pass from the thick fleety Air in Greenland, that the Sun was seen when it was a Degree or two below the Horizon; yet this will not salve the Matter. For the Text says expresly, that the Sun stood still the whole Day *in the midst of Heaven*, or the Twelve a-Clock Line; that is, it was twelve a Clock for twelve Hours together, the Sun staying so long in that one Point. But if your Account by Refraction were true, the Day must receive its Lengthening about Sun-setting, when the Sun was near the Horizon, and that not above a Quarter of an Hour at the most. Neither could this easilly come to pass, in so thin an Atmosphere as that of Palestine. Besides, the Scripture says expresly, that this was prayed for by Joshua, in order to encourage the Jews, and to dishearten their Enemies. But why should he pray for such a natural Effect as you would have this to be? Was it worth any one's while to wish for a Minute or two more Day-light, which it was impossible, that either the Jews, or their Enemies, could observe? But I am weary of answering such Arguments as these, which fall of themselves, and which I am confident can never convince those that urge them; and 'tis honester to deny the Authority of Scripture altogether, than to explain the Force of it away, by such jejune Interpretations.

Phil. Why then, *Credentius*, if you would have me appear a bare-faced Infidel, I must plainly tell you, that I do not think, that either *Moses*, or the Prophets, who succeeded him, had any Degree of that Inspiration which they pretended to. For what ever is inspired must needs be true, and agreeable, both to Reason and Goodness; but there are many Things to be found in their Writings and Lives, which are contrary to both. I shall begin with *Moses*. Indeed, *Credentius*, you have, in some Measure, vindicated him from some Absurdities, which are usually imputed to his History of the Creation *, but I

* Conference with a Theist. Part I.

am afraid your Art will fail you in doing as much, for some other Objections against his Books and Character. Now I pray, Sir, what do you think of his History of the Deluge? Don't you think this very odd, that the whole World should be drowned at the same Time? For my Part, I can as soon believe, that a Man could be drowned in his own Spittle, as that the World should be deluged by the Water in it. Now *Moses* says expressly, that *all the high Hills under the whole Heaven were covered*. Now to do this, we must have Water enough to reach up to the Top of the Pique of *Tenariff*, which is at present three Miles perpendicular, and at the Time of *Noah* much more, a considerable Part of it being washed down by the Rains since. Now where shall we find Water to cover the Earth above three Miles high quite round? If the whole Ocean were circumfused, it would do little or nothing towards this Effect, much less a Rain of forty Days. For the Water of the Sea, take one Place with another, is hardly a Quarter of a Mile deep; for tho' in some Places in a deep Chanel it may be Half a Mile towards the Shore, it is but three or four Fathoms; so that all together it is not more than a Quarter of a Mile deep. But if this were all pumped out of the Chanel of the Sea, and kept against its Nature by a Miracle stagnating upon the higher Earth, it could cover the whole Earth no deeper in Water than the Sea is now, which is but a Quarter of a Mile; so that there will want two Miles and three Quarters of the Hight which *Moses* assigns to it. This is upon Supposition that the Sea and the dry Ground are nigh of the same Extent; but I believe an exact Survey of the Earth about the Northern and Southern Poles, would shew that the Earth was much larger. But granting them of the same Bigness; to raise the Chanel of the Sea three Miles higher (that is, to the Tops of the highest Mountains) round the World, would take up twenty-four Times as much Water as there is now in the Sea, twelve Quarters of a Mile deep in Water (*i. e.* twelve Oceans) to be laid upon the Sea, and twelve more upon the Land. And then pray consider, what becomes of the

pretended Inspiration of Moses's History, when 'tis Demonstration that there is not the twentieth Part of Water in the World, as is sufficient to cause such a Deluge.

Difficulties of the Deluge accounted for. *Cred.* Your Gentlemen are often wont to call that Demonstration, which is oftentimes but lame Argument. For nothing can be Demonstration against the divine Power, but absolute Incompatibility and Contradiction. And every *Supposition* which shews the Possibility of the Thing, is sufficient to overthrow your Demonstration, as you call it. And therefore several learned and ingenious Gentlemen have of late Years set themselves to consider how to give a philosophical Account of the Deluge ; and have published some *Hypotheses* upon this Subject, which are full of fine Learning and curious Thought. The Main of all of them are good Argument against the Infidels, because each Hypothesis, shews the Possibility of that Deluge which they deny. As for the ancient Suppositions, that this immense Quantity of Water was owing to the coming down of the supercelestial Waters, or the Condensation of Air ; they are, I think, a little too unphilosophical for this inquisitive Age, and are therefore like to do very little Good among the Unbelievers.

Remarks on the late Theories, &c. The most agreeable, and surprising Book which, of late Years, has offered it self to the World, was Dr. Burnet's *Theory* upon this Subject. The Design whereof was so Great and Noble, the Language so exact, the Thought so delicate ; the whole Work so uniform and of a Piece with it self, and adorned with such variety of pleasant Learning ; wherein were such ingenious Accounts given of the great Revolutions of Nature, of the *Formation* of the World, the *Paradisiacal State*, of the *Antediluvian Longevity*, the *Deluge* and *Conflagration* ; that tho' there might want some Degrees of Probability to make every Reader believe his *Theory*, exactly True, yet it pleased most of them so, as to think it was pity it was not. Far be it from me to detract from the ingenious Guesses of that learned Man ; but yet there are some Things in that Hypothesis, which lie very difficult in my Mind, and do not seem so agreeable to the mechanical Laws he goes by, and other

other *Phænomena*, which are observable in Nature. The *Oval Figure*, which he ascribes to the *Antediluvian Earth* seems inconsistent with the present Figure which it is found to be of; that is a *Prolate Sphæroide*, or an *Oval* turned about its lesser *Axis*, (*i. e.*) of the fashion of a *Loaf*. Which was a prudent Design of Nature to make it of this Figure, because the additional Heaps of Ice and Snow, which are continually lodged at the Poles, by the Vapours constantly flying North and South, should never increase the Globe beyond a Circle. His excluding the *Annual Motion* of the Earth, and its Motion of *Parallelism* to the Poles of the World, allowing it only a simple Motion round an *Axis Parallel* to the Poles of the Ecliptick, and consequently taking away the Vicissitude of Seasons, which is one of the greatest Beauties of the World; and leaving the greater Part of it uninhabitable, is a Matter which one cannot so easily comply with; especially when the first Chapter of *Genesis* says, that the Stars shall be *for Times, and for Seasons, and for Days, and for Years*. And so is his Exclusion from thence of the *Seas, Hills, and great Rivers*, allowing only some trifling Streams from the Poles. For the World without the Sea, would be but a Prison, where Men would be lockt up from one another without Intercourse, would have no Communication in Commerce, Arts, Invention; but People must be content to live uncomfortably at Home, upon their own Stocks, and their own Improvements. Without *Hills*, Men would be bereaved of the Ornament and Convenience of Metals, of the Usefulness of Minerals and Stones; and Men would have wanted Money, domestick Utensils, Physick, and Buildings; nay, without *Hills* to drain off the Mists and Rains, and *Seas* to evaporate the Mists and Rains from, it is unaccountable to me, how there should be such a Thing as a River in the World; and I fancy the easy Descent upon the Declivity of an *Oval* as big as the Earth, is not agreeable to the Laws of *Hydrostaticks*, and the usual Current of Waters. Nor is it less difficult to me to imagine, how a Crust of so vast a Thickness, as that of the Earth must be,

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be, should be broken by any natural Force, especially being supported equally by the subterraneous Waters ; or as for any Fissures or Cracks by the Heat of the Sun, they are demonstrated in the hottest Countries, not to go many Yards into the Ground ; and as for any Earthquakes raised by Evaporation of the *Abyss* below, every Ditcher can tell, that the Heat of the Sun-beams does not go so many Inches under Ground, as this Hypothesis must suppose Leagues ; and besides Earthquakes, and subterraneous Eruptions are not caused by rarefied Vapours, but by the Accension of sulphureous Damps, which like Gun-powder, rend and tear, and carry all before them, and are often wont to break out in visible Flame. Nay further, those vast Fissures and ugly Gaps would have been more inconvenient and unsightly in the *Antediluvian* Earth, than the most barren Mountains and roughest Seas are with us. Neither does the usual Depth of the Channels of the Sea, seem to answer to the Depth of the *Abyss* ; nor the Regularity of the Mountains to the accidental Fragments of such a Crust. There would then appear frequently prodigious Wells and Gaps, where the Fragments did not exactly meet, and such horrid and naked *Apices*, which could not by this Time, have been any Thing smoothed by Rains, or covered with Grass or Herbs : Nay, even in the very Situation of the Mountains, and greatest Hills, there appears wise Contrivance, and not accidental Fracture ; for to go no farther than our own Country, all our great Ridges of Hills, in *England*, run East and West, so do the *Alps*, in *Italy*, and in some Measure, the *Pyrenees* ; so do the Mountains of the Moon, in *Africk*, and so does Mount *Taurus*, and *Caucasus*. And further there appears a prudent Foresight, in not making the Ridges of Hills, continued, but by breaking them off into *Tumuli*, or *Heads*, part of each of which lies obliquely behind another, and generally admits a skew Passage between. For unless there was such a Ridge of Hills frequent from East to West, the Vapours would all run Northward, and there would be no Rains in the *Mediterranean* Countries, but the Rivers dried up, and the Sea

See it self in time evaporated and frozen into polar Ice. And unless the Hills were divided into these oblique Breaks, so as to keep back the Vapours and let in the Northern Air, the World would be far more liable to Pestilences and Putrefaction than now they are, and all Places as unhealthy as Scanderoon. These things, with the Deduction of the *Americans* from another Race than *Noah*, and some other Matters of less consequence, are my Reasons why I cannot subscribe to that learned Doctor's Solution of the *Noachical Deluge*; and therefore must beg his leave to cast about and see if I can find a better elsewhere, that I can more easily acquiesce in.

Dr. *Woodward*, to whom the World is for ever indebted, for his curious and diligent Observations of Shells and Minerals, and other subterraneous Phænomena; has promised in his *Essay*, a more *natural Hypothesis*; but one of the Grounds which he designs to build his Theory upon, does seem to me so precarious and impossible, that I must see a great deal of good Proof, before I can assent to it. For it does not appear to me, how it is possible that the Waters continuance a few Months upon the Face of the Earth should dissolve the Compages of the most rigid Fossils, and suspend the Particles of them all in the circumfused Water, except only conchous Substances; and that, when the Waters were withdrawn, they should be let down to fix and be compacted again. For if it was possible that Water in so short a Space could dissolve Marbles and Adamants, yet methinks the same should more easily dissolve Oyster-shells and Cockles, which are of a more tenuous Composition, and more easy of Dissolution.

Mr. *Whiston*, in his *Theory*, has avoided most of the Difficulties which were chargeable upon the First, and has given the World a Taste of the extraordinary mathematical and philological Learning he stands possesse of. The chief Fault I find in him is, that he has stuck more to Mr. *Newton's* than *Moses's* Philosophy, and seems too fond and credulous of his ingenious Hypothesis of the Comet. Nay; the imputing this great Catastrophe

to the necessary Laws of a Comet's *Trajectio*n, which the Scriptures tell us was sent by God for the Sin of Mankind, seems to give too great a Scope for the Scoffs of Libertines, and the atheistical Fatality. His turning *Days* into *Years*, and denying the diurnal Revolution of the Earth at first, is methinks a little too bold, when it does not seem at all to Favour his Hypothesis, but only to give God six *Years* time to work in, when the Infidels already grudge him so much as six *Days*. His fancying two Courses of Rain from the Scripture, which only seems to repeat the Relation of one, is not to me so satisfactory; nor his Exclusion of Clouds and Mists, which is agreeable indeed to the *Burnettian Theory*, but, I think, not to his. Neither can I conceive, that the bare passing through the Tail or Atmosphere of a Comet could afford the thousand Part of the Water that Theory has occasion for, and he himself is forced to fetch a great Part of it from the Abyfs. Nor is it credible, that the Earth, a cold Planet, should go off with 750,000 Miles of the Comet's Tail, which could not be supported by the Comet it self, but only by Reason of the burning Heat of the Body of it. And it is a Mistake, I suppose, to think, that the round Circle about the Body of the Comet is a watry Atmosphere, much grosser than the Tail, so as to afford nine Times as much Water to the Earth passing through that, as through the Tail; for the *Ring* is by some curious Observers thought to be only the curling and winding round of the Smoke, rising at first to a determinate Height from all Parts of the Comet, and then making off to the Part opposite to the Sun, as you may see Fig. III. Neither do I fancy, that the Earth, passing even through the Atmosphere of a Comet, could gain any more Water by that, than any Thing can do by passing through the Smoke of a Chimney; for both of them are but Smoke, only the former is the thinner, as being the fume arising from the terreous Part of the Comet, by its *Parelion* almost vitrified and calcined, the aqueous Parts being first evaporated and sent off farther into the Extremity of the Tail. And besides, I cannot conceive,



conceive, how the Earth should not almost have been fired, and *Noah*, and his Ark, burnt to Powder, by the glowing Heat of the melted Planet; for according to my little Philosophy, I should imagine it as comfortable living in a red hot Oven for an hour or two; as in such a sultry Atmosphere as this. And it is hard to think, that this Comet should give no more Disturbance in this Part of the Universe, but only to turn the Earth's *Annual Orbit*, from a Circle to an *Ellipsis*; for according to Mr. *Newton's* Principles, if the Comet had been bigger than the Earth, it had carried it away to Rights in its *Parabola*, through the vast *extra-saturnine* Spaces; and if it had been less, it had been stopt by the Earth, and so we had been troubled with its smoky Tail about us ever since. Or if it had been of the same Bigness with the Earth, and if it had well nigh the same Celerity with the Earth, we should have had the same troublesome Companion nevertheless; or however, it is ten thousand to one, but it would have run away with our *Moon*, if it had happened to have come nigher to That than the Earth does. Nor does it lie easy upon my Mind, how such a prodigious Quantity of Water, that he supposes to have come from the Comet, could be disposed of; it is impossible it could be one quarter of it suspended in the Air, or lodged in the Chancels of the Seas; for the Chancels could bear no proportion to it. Nor can I think the Seas were so much as enlarged by the Deluge; but that they both, before and since, have been growing less, and less, by the prodigious Quantities of Water employ'd in the Production of Trees and Plants, which are reduced afterward into *Mold*, and always retain the Species of Earth; or lie buried in the Ground, and never return to the Sea again. To say nothing of how much more is employed in the Concretion of Stones and conchous Substances, how much is licked up by the *Aether* out of the Atmosphere as the Earth is swimming through it, how much more flies over in Vapours to the Poles, notwithstanding the Barricado of the Hills, is frozen there, and never returns again, unless some few Particles, it may be, of them at

some Seasons of the Year in Winds : And to pass over the Observations of the Chanels of great Rivers near the Sea, which seem formerly to have been far broader than they are now, and the many great Countries which the Sea has deserted. And besides, lastly, in my Mind it is impossible that the swelling of the Abyss should alter the Figure of the Earth's Crust, from a Circle or Oval to a Sphæroide ; that the Water had force enough to do it ; or that this Effect could happen without shattering the Compages, being of a brittle faxeous Substance, into Pieces. These are my Reasons, why I cannot acquiesce in the Hypothesis of that ingenious and learned Gentleman, as exactly true ; yet I think it a curious Essay to shew the Infidels not only the Possibility of the mosaick History, but how finely it may be made to correspond with Philosophy ; and after all, that 'tis easier to find Faults with this Theory, than to compose another so good.

Phil. Well ! Now you see how these great Wits are miserably at a Loss to explain this unaccountable History ; and therefore it is in vain to try any further to explain that, which will admit of no Solution. So that you had better ingenuously give up the Cause, and own, that it is an impossible Relation, calculated only for the Illiterateness of those Times, to make the Jews stand in Fear of the Deity, when they were told that such a tragical Punishment was inflicted by him upon Mankind for their Sins.

Cred. If God was the Cause of the Deluge, as our Religion supposes, and not natural and mechanical Causes of their own proper Tendency ; then God might bring it to pass a thousand Ways, that we know nothing of ; for his Omnipotence will be able to bear up against all the pretended Impossibilities that you are able to raise against the History of the Deluge.

1. But if this History of the Deluge be such an impossible unaccountable History, how come all the Nations of the World to have such an impossible Notion got into their Heads ? Though several Men might have the same

unaccountable Fancies, yet it is hard to think that all Men should be troubled with the same Dreams. And it seems to me to have more Impossibility, that all Nations should have Traditions of a Deluge, if there had been no such Thing as a Deluge ; than any you can shew me in the Deluge it self. The *Babylonians*, *Phœnicians*, *Affyrians*, in their Histories make mention of a Deluge, as you may see in *Eusebius*, and *Josephus*. Deucalion's Flood was so famous in all the Greek and Latin Mythologists and Poets, that nothing more need be said of it. *Martinius* in his History of *China* relates the same of the *Chinese*; and so does *Josephus Acosta*, *Herera*, and *De Laet* of the *Americans*. And *Lucian* * relates the ancient Tradition they had of the Deluge at *Hierapolis* in *Syria*; which is almost as Exact as the mosaick Relation of it. The Account, though it be something long, is not unpleasant, and deserves Consideration. *This Race of Men, which now is, was not the first; but that Race was quite destroyed.* But these are of a second Generation, and from their first Progenitor Deucalion have increased to so great a Multitude as we see. Now of those former Men they tell this Story : They being contentious, did very unrighteous Things, they neither kept their Oaths, nor were hospitable to Strangers; for which this great Misfortune befel them : All of a sudden the Earth gave out of her self a great Quantity of Water, there were mighty Showers, the Rivers overflowed, the Sea was much higher, by which all Things became Water, and all Men perished. Only Deucalion was left unto the second Generation, † upon Account of his good Counsel and Piety. Now he was saved after this manner. He had a great $\Delta\alpha\rhoν\xi$ (i. e.) an Ark or Chest, into which he came with the Children and Women, of his House; and then entered Hogs, and Horses, and Lions, and Serpents, and all other Animals, which live upon the Earth, $\muα\cdot\upsilon\alpha\zeta\omega\gamma\epsilon\alpha$, all of them with their Mates. And he received them all, and they did him no harm; for by Assistance from Heaven, there was

* *De Deâ Syriâ.* † *'Eυελίας Ενεά.* This is agreeable to what the Scripture says of *Noah*'s being a Preacher of Righteousness to the ungodly Antediluvians.

a great Amity between them. So all sailed in this one Chest, as long as the Water did predominate. But these Things are told in the Greek Histories of Deucalion. But of those Things which happened after, one Thing worthy of great Admiration is told by the Inhabitants of Hierapolis; that in their Country, there was a great Gap into which all this Water sunk. Upon which, Deucalion built Altars and a Temple over the Gap, and consecrated it to Juno. I my self saw the Gap. It is very little at the bottom of the Temple, as I told you. Whether it was formerly bigger or no, and grown narrower by Age, I cannot tell; but this I can tell, that That which I saw was but little. Now they make this the Sign of the History. Twice in a Year Water is brought into the Temple: And not only the Priests bring it, but all Syria and Arabia. Nay, Men come even from Euphrates to the Sea, all carrying Water; which they first pour into the Temple. Then the Water descends into the Gap; and though the Gap be small, yet it receives a prodigious Quantity of Water. And when they do this they tell, that Deucalion first instituted this Custom, to be a Memorial of the Calamity, and his Deliverance from it. This is the ancient Tradition which those about the Temple tell.

From which Relation it is remarkable, that it was the Opinion of the People of Syria, that there had been an universal Deluge, that a certain Man and his Family were saved in an Ark, and a Male and Female of every kind of Animals, to restore again the drowned Creation; and that all this vast Quantity of Water sunk into an *Hiatus* of the Earth, and made the World habitable again. Now, I hope, that Moses's Relation is not so incredible, when it has the joint Testimony of so many Nations, and particularly the Heathen Syrians so exactly corresponding with it. Indeed this Story in *Lucian* is told after his Way drollingly, as if he did not believe it; but yet there is no question to be made but that it was the Relation of those People, though he has a Mind to expose it.

But I need not trouble my self to prove the Being of a Deluge by Tradition of Nations, when late Observations have given Demonstration of it. The Beds of Shells

which

which are often found on the Tops of the highest Mountains, and petrified Bones and Teeth of Fishes, which are dug up hundreds of Miles from the Sea, Trees and Shrubs buried many Fathom under ground, are the clearest Evidence in the World, that the Waters have some Time or other overflow'd the highest Parts of the Earth ; which was the Deluge which we contend for. The Truth of these Matters is not to be contested now, by any that have but the least Insight in experimental Philosophy. Nor can it be with any Degree of Probability said, that all these subterraneous Bodies, are but only the mimical and mock Productions of Nature, for that these are real Shells, the nicest Examination both of the Eye and the Microscope do attest ; and that they are true Bones, may be experimented by burning them ; and then they will first turn into a Cole, and afterwards into a Calx, as other Bones do. How far Nature may sport her self in the subterraneous World, in the Impression of the Images of terrestrial Plants upon Slate and Coles, I will not dispute ; but that it should produce true Bones and Shells, which answer in all Respects to those of the genuine Animals, is incredible, and next to the Boldness of an epicurean Concourse, for the Frame of the World.

2. I shall therefore only set my self to prove, that *That the Deluge was possible.*

there is Water enough in or about the Earth to drown it, and to rise up to that height which *Moses* did report it did.

I confess, I do not think, that the Waters of the Sea are one quarter enough for such a Deluge, and therefore it must be sought for elsewhere. That there is a vast Quantity of Waters under ground, and an * Abyss within the outward Crust of the Earth, is I think evident to any who considers, that in many Places the Sea disgorges it self into the Bowels of the Earth, and does not pass off by any Out-current. The single *Mediterranean* Sea is a sufficient Instance of this ; for considering how many,

* Vid. Dr. Burnet's Theor. p. 1.

and some vast Rivers run into it, and it having no visible outlet, what should become of the Waters? Nay, considering that there are two Currents of the Sea set into it, one at the Straits of *Gibralter*, and another vastly strong one of the *Pontus*, which the Ships do, with difficulty, bear up against; it must necessarily be allowed, that this Sea does empty it self by subterraneous Passages into some great Receptacle of Waters underneath. For otherways, many Ages ago, the *Mediterranean* had over-flow'd and drowned several Countries on the adjacent Shores. Nay, * the fathomless Bottoms there which some have tried in vain with so much Cordage to reach, is the most evident Proof which can be of the Truth of this Assertion. And the same holds likewise in the *Caspian-Sea*. And I think there is little doubt to be made, but those dangerous Gulfs and Eddies which the Sailors shun in many Parts of the Ocean, are but only great Holes or subterraneous Passages through which the upper Sea is gulping down into the Abyss beneath. Now if there be such a great Receptacle of Waters beneath the Earth, as there is no Question to be made of it, so many mighty Seas continually running into it, then the Earth must be hollow, and only a superior Crust, concluding within it an Abyss of Waters, as is represented, Fig. I. and Fig. II. If there be the same Quantity of Water remaining as there was at the Creation, then the total Hollow of the Earth will be filled up with Water: But if any Part of it be lost, or consolidated upon the outward Superficies of the Earth's Crust; then by the Laws of Attraction, if the Water does not exceed in Gravity, the circumambient Earth, it will lie round it in the ring P S R Q, and there will be a hollow in the central Part w w x z. But if the Body of Water be of greater Gravity than the Crust of the Earth, then the Mass of it will lie next to the thickest Part of the Earth, or where there is more Matter; so that if the Earth be thicker about the Pole X, or if there be

* Vid. Dr. Smith's Account to the Royal Society in the Philosophical Transactions.

any internal Solid there, it will then lie round Part of the *Limbus* of the Earth U T X Y and leave the hollow at U Y. Fig. II. Now suppose the Diameter of the Earth or terraqueous Globe to be, as it is thereabouts, eight thousand Miles, and the Thicknes of the Crust of the Earth a thirty-second Part of this, as the second Figure represents, then the Crust will be two hundred and fifty Miles thick, which will be a Solidity strong enough to contain the internal Waters, to resist the chapping from the Sun, to keep a consistency in all the rapid Motions of the Earth. Or let it be an eighth Part, as is represented, Fig. I. and then the Earth's Crust will be five hundred Miles thick, which to be sure is abundantly sufficient. Now upon either of these two Suppositions, there will be Water enough, when drawn out upon the Superficies of the Earth, to drown the World to a far greater Height, than what *Moses* relates. Now it is but supposing, that God by a miraculous Power sucked out Part of this Abyss through the *Foramina* or subterraneous Passages which lie dispersed at the bottom of the Sea, as suppose about the Point T of Fig. II. to the Height of four or five Miles; and then the highest Mountains will be laid under Water, the Water diffusing it self both Ways from h. to k; so that if it be in h four Miles high, it will be at least three in k. And then if after that the suspending Force were taken of, and the Water descended through the same *Foramina*, and left the Earth dry as it was before; you have, *Philologus*, at least a possible Account of the Deluge.

Phil. But truly, Sir, this miraculous Power sticks most in my Stomach; that is so strangely Unphilosophical, and such a subterfuge of dull Divines, that methinks any Man of Sense should be ashamed to make Use of that shift. Besides, I am not very well reconciled to your Waters which you suppose to fill up the hollow of the Earth. Indeed those who allow a central Solid, have somewhat more to say for themselves; but your Hypothesis destroys the Laws of specifick Gravity, and makes the lighter Waters most unnaturally to lie below the Crust of the heavy Earth.

Cred.

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Cred. Let the Supposition of a miraculous Power in the Deluge be as unphilosophical as you please, I am sure it is more Unchristian, and more unreasonable, to suppose, that it came to pass by natural Causes. For if it came to pass by natural Causes, there must have been a Deluge, whether the antediluvian World had been so wicked or no ; and then, the Preaching of *Noah* to them had been all Collusion, and God's Menaces before-hand had been inconsistent, both with his Justice and Verity. If they had repented upon *Noah's* Instructions, they could not have escaped the Deluge, which by this Supposition depended upon necessary Causes, and could not but have been. Or to say that it was necessary both for the Antediluvians to be so perversly wicked, and that the Deluge must likewise happen ; is to assert a Fatality of sinning, is at the same Time to destroy all Religion, Free-will, and the Goodness of God. 'Tis therefore plain, that the Deluge did not depend upon natural and necessary Causes ; but upon the just and providential Power of God, which overruled the Power of Nature, and might either bring the Deluge upon the World, or with-hold it, according to his good Pleasure and Wisdom, or as the Deserts of Mankind did require.

Neither is your Notion of specifick Gravity any Objection against our Supposition of an Abyss being included within the Crust of the Earth, even without the Fancy of a central Solid, or dense Fluid, which some imagine. For the Notion of a central Solid is but a Contrivance to keep in the central Fire that some Men fancy there, which otherways would be quenched by the circumambient Waters. But this central Fire is only *Cartesius's* Conceit, who by this Means contrived to turn burning Earths into Suns, and incrustated Suns into Earth ; which is a fancy the World now begins to be weary of. And as for a dense Fluid, that I take to be a more precarious Hypothesis, and less to be relied upon than the other. Neither can it be supposed, that Nature must be confined to Work in the Creation according to the Laws of specifick Gravity. For according to this Rule,

the Sun, which is the Centre of the *Magnus Orbis*, must be the densest of all the planetary System, which though it be the biggest, yet is the most thin and refined. *Venus*, *Mercury* *, and the *Moon*, though nigher to the Centre of the System, are denser than the *Earth*. Neither is this Rule observable in the Earth it self. For several of the *heaviest Fossils*, as Metals, Marble, and Stone, lie often very high towards the Surface of the Earth, and other *lighter Strata* below them. Nor is there any Reason to think, that God in the Creation wrought by such Laws of Gravity. For without doubt he wrought either by his immediate omnipotent Power, or else by a subordinate plastick Nature, as he does in the Production of Animals and Vegetables since. And here the Laws of specifick Gravity have little or nothing to do ; nay, we see they are constantly superseded. When the Fibres of a Tree thrust themselves upwards from the Centre, and the Juices of it, contrary to their own proper Tendency, are drawn up so many Foot from the Ground, what become here of the Laws of specifick Gravity ? Is the Body of any Animal composed after this manner ? If this were so, there would be no such Thing as organical Parts, which are composed so admirably for the Use and Beauty of the Animal. If this were so, a Man which is the most beautiful, would be the most clumsy Creature in the Creation. His Bones must all lie towards his Feet, his Flesh next to them, his Blood and Spirits where his Head. And then consider what a Monster of a Creature this specifick Gravity would make him. Neither does it avail any Thing to say, that the Composition of an Animal does in some Measure answer to the Laws of specifick Gravity, because the heavy Bones which lie inmost are inclosed with the Flesh and Blood which are lighter. But then pray consider, that the Bones were not placed there by this Law, but by the prudent Direction of Nature to support the pliable Flesh, and to extend it to that just Proportion which she designed. But granting the Sup-

* See Mr. Newton's Principle Philosophy Math.

position

position true ; yet the Marrow, which is much lighter than the Bones, is concluded within them ; the Bones being its superficial Crust, in the same manner as we suppose the Earth to be to the Abyss. Now, why should not we suppose that God used as much Wisdom and Contrivance in the Formation of the Body of the Earth, as in that of an Animal ? Or why should specifick Gravity tie him up more in one than the other ? No doubt there was the same most admirable Contrivance in the Formation of the course Body of the Earth, as in other finer and smaller Contextures. Only the Earth is a Body, whose Parts are so great, as they cannot be distinctly view'd at the same time, and many of them hid from us, and therefore we are apt to conclude, that they are lesse elegant ; so we proceed to philosophize upon it under this Mistake, and allow it only the rude Contexture which might arise from the bare Subsideney of Parts, and the Laws of specifick Gravity. But this is a grievous Errour, and we might, with as much Philosophy, pretend to give an Account of the Organization of Animals by the same Laws. For I doubt not, but if we were let into the subterraneous World, and could have a distinct View of Stones and Minerals, the excellent Disposition and Variegation of the several *Strata*, the wonderful Contrivances of subterraneous Currents, by which one Sea is fed by another, and all receive their Origin from the one great Foundation of the Abyss, and to which they all pay their Tribute again ; to consider the spreading Veins of the lesser Springs, which at first are distilled from the Rains and Mists, by uniting together do form the greatest Rivers ; if we consider all this, we cannot but allow, that God formed the Earth with as much Wisdom and Contrivance as other Parts of the Creation, and that he might make it to be a Thick-shell surrounding the Abyss, though contrary to the Laws of specifick Gravity, if that did contribute to the good of the whole, and the usefulness of Mankind, as I think the Communication of the upper and lower Seas sufficiently does.

Phil. But still, *Credentius*, this unaccountable Miracle lies hard upon me, especially when your Divines allow, that God generally works by second Causes, even when he acts Miraculously and above the Power of Nature; by giving Nature as it were a Power superior to it self. And indeed in the present Case, it looks very odd, that God should engage his Omnipotence to make the Water of the Abyss ascend contrary to its Nature, or that his inferiour Agents, the Angels should be employ'd invisibly to Pump up so much Water from thence as would drown the World. Without doubt it would lie more easy upon Men's Minds, if this great Catastrophe were accounted for in a more natural Way; in which the Laws of the Universe are not so forcibly opposed as in this Supposition.

Cred. For my Part, it lies as easy upon my Mind to think, in general, that God miraculously raised up the Water of the Abyss, and sent such continual Spouts and Rains, that in forty Day's Time the whole World was drowned; as if I was able to find out those immediate Causes he made Use of in this dreadful Judgment. For after all I must own it to be the Finger of God, either making use of intermediate Causes, or himself immediately producing the Effect. If I am sure the Effect was miraculous, what need I care where the divine Power was first impressed, whether immediately upon the Effect it self, or upon any of its pre-existing and necessary Causes? I am sure by the divine Revelation, that God is in it either first or last, and this is sufficient for my Conviction; and I think, the Holy Scripture is not so much obliged to gratify our Curiosity. I doubt not but there are innumerable Ways which God could have made Use of to drown the World, even by intermediate and natural Causes, which the wisest Philosopher never dreamt of; and if any of these Ways are shewn to be possible, then all the Arguments which would infer the Impossibility of the Deluge are at an End. Now to comply with your Curiosity for once, I will endeavour to shew what second Causes

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Causes God might possibly make Use of in the deluging the World, and by what Means the Abyss was drawn up over the Face of the Earth. Not that I am so vain to think that he did make Use of these means; but that if he did, the Effect would be so far from being *impossible*, that it would, upon that Condition, be *necessary*.

Now it is most generally among the best Philosophers agreed, that the Moon is the Cause of the Tides, and that the nigher she is to the Sea, as at her time of South-ing, she raises the Water the higher by her Attraction of it towards her. So that if by the supernatural Power of God, the Moon were brought very near to the Earth or the Earth to the Moon, such a vast Tide would be raised, upon Supposition there is Communication between the Abyss and the upper Seas, that the World would be drowned to the Height which *Moses* assigns. Now I fancy this might come to pass by the pure *Acceleration of the Earth's annual Motion*. For let C D A B represent the annual Motion of the Earth in the time of the Antediluvians, which is a perfect Circle, in which it is probable all the Planets, after their Creation at first, revolved. Let B. represent the Earth, and I. the Moon, revolving round the Earth in the Circle *I pil*. Now when the Earth was in the Point I, let us suppose its annual Motion to be accelerated, so as to exceed the exact Proportion there was formerly between the Attraction of the Sun H, and the Celerity of the Earth; and then the Earth, instead of coming to the point B in the Circle C D A B, will go off to the Point c, and move in the Ellipsis E F D A. Now by this new elliptical Motion, the Earth in the Point c, will be nigher to the Moon I, by the distance B c, than it was in the Point B; which would raise such a prodigious Tide, as would produce the Effect we contend for. And then the Moon for a considerable time would revolve about the Earth at c, in the Circle I m h, instead of its ancient Orbit *I pil*, which will so long keep up the Tides over the whole Face of the Earth, as is described Fig. I. and II. But the Tides will decrease gradually as the Moon by her menstrual Course

Fig. IV.

Course shall have made more *Perihelions*, for every time she comes nigher to the Sun, the Sun will more and more conduce together, with the Resistance of her own impressed Motion, to draw her from her late contracted, to her ancient and more enlarged Orbit. So that a Month or two after, when the Earth, in its annual Course, shall be in the Point F, and the Moon be in her *Perihelion Q*, she shall then have enlarged her Orbit to *o Q r* greater than her contracted one *w y z*, or *m b I*, so that after five Months, the time of the Continuance of the Deluge, when the Earth shall have come to the Point D, then the Orbit of the Moon shall be enlarged to *u s t*, equal to her former one *I p l*, or as great as her other she had before the Acceleration of the Earth's Motion. So that then the Moon being as far distant from the Earth as formerly she was, those great Tides will be over, and the Deluge at an End; all the Waters being again sunk into the Belly of the Earth, through the same Cavities by which they ascended.

Phil. But stay, Sir, this does not much mend the Matter, for this Attributes the cause of the Flood only to the breaking up the Fountains of the great Deep, which *Moses* likewise attributes to another Cause, viz. the Rain of forty Days and forty Nights.

Cred. Indeed *Moses* says, that at the beginning of the Deluge it rained forty Days and Nights; but he does not say that these Rains added any Thing considerably to the Deluge of the whole World. They only raised the Waters to such a height, that the Ark was born up, and swam upon the Waters. *And the Flood, or Rain, was forty Days upon the Earth: And the Waters increased and bore up the Ark, and it was lift up above the Earth*, Gen. vii. 17. But in the two following Verses is expressed the Effect of the Waters rising out of the Abyss. *And the Waters prevailed and increased greatly upon the Earth, and the Waters prevailed exceedingly upon the Earth, and all the high Hills, that were under the whole Heaven were covered.* So that what was the Effect of the Rains to lift up the Ark, *Moses* calls only increasing of the Waters; but when he afterwards

afterwards speaks of the Eruption of the Abyss, he says a great deal more, that Waters *increased greatly*, and *prevailed exceedingly*. And indeed this previous Flood from the Rains, or Preludium of the Deluge, was wisely designed by God Almighty, that the Ark might be lift up before the Torrent from the Abyss came; or otherways such a mighty Current running with so great a Force would have overthrown and drowned it before it could have been lifted up. But a Rain of forty Days having before made a *Land Flood*, great enough to bear up the Ark, the Fury of the roaring Torrent of the Abyss would be broken by the yielding Waters under the Ark ; and so would by Degrees be raised to the height which the Waters rose to without Danger. I will not contend that there was no more than this forty Day's Rain ; for it is probable that it rained the greatest Part of the Time that the Waters covered the Surface of the Earth ; for the Sea then being above as large again as it formerly was, must supply a far greater Quantity of Vapours than could possibly be suspended in the Air, and therefore must fall down in frequent, or continual Spouts, or Rains. This, I take, *Philologus*, to be a possible Account of the Deluge, and is a sufficient Confutation of them, who decry it as an Impossibility.

Phil. Well ! supposing that the Absurdities of *Moses's* Relation of the Deluge are not so great as are generally imagined, yet I cannot allow him to be a true Prophet ; because the pretended Miracles by which he endeavoured to establish his Laws and Doctrines, seem to me to be mere Artifice, contrived only to beguile the silly Jews, and to lead them tamely by the Nose without Opposition. They, poor Creatures ! thought that God wrought mighty Miracles by his Hand, whilst he was only working Designs for himself, to purchase himself Admiration among the Rabble, or else to gain a Jurisdiction under the specious Name of a Theocracy. But alas ! these Miracles are all Craft and Collusion, which any cunning Man might seem to do, if he had but such simple Inspectors. Witness his pretending to receive the Law in

Mount *Sinai*; where he gave out, that he conversed with God, who appeared there in *Smoke*, and *Thundering* and *Lightening*. No doubt the poor Folks were strangely amazed at this terrible Scene. But *Moses*, or any other intelligent Man, knew well enough, that there was no great Matter in it. For all this wonderful Appearance was in all Probability only a *Volcano* in that Mountain, which *Moses* did very politically forecast, that the *Jews* should not come to the Knowledge of. For if they had run gazing up the Mountain as well as he; the Secret would have been found out, and the Miracle spoil'd. But *Moses* very prudently commands *, that a *Hand shall not touch the Mountain, but he shall be stoned or shot through, whether it be Beast or Man*: Nay, not so much as the *Priest's* themselves must come up; let the Lord break forth upon them, ver. 24: but only *Moses* and *Aaron*, who were let into the Mystery, must come there. Nor is this *Vulcano* in Mount *Sinai* only a Conjecture, but is confirmed by the Observation of Travellers, who still behold the Mountain full of Ashes, which do plainly shew the Ruins, as it were, of an extinguished *Ætna*. This, *Credentius*, is an Objection not to be bantered off; for if this stands, your whole revealed Religion shakes; because this is the very Foundation of the Jewish and Christian Institution; and if there be any Trick here, as is much to be feared, all that is built upon it, is good for Nothing.

Cred. There is so much false Suggestion and groundless Assertion in this last Objection, that it is intolerable; and one had need of the Patience of that Holy Religion you are opposing, to be unmoved at it.

1. But pray, Sir, what By-Ends had *Moses* to serve by his playing this sham Prank, as you do suppose; in the Mount? He could not get a greater Authority over them than he had before, he had been their Deliverer from the *Egyptians*, and was their Condueter in the Wildernes, and had as absolute Command over that People as could be desired. Neither could Fame, or a Desire of raising his

* Exod. xix. 13.

Family, put him upon any such indirect Methods. For he seems to have been the most sincere and modest, and most disinterested Man of all Men that ever lived. He is so open and faithful in his History, as to record his own Failures, and those of his dearest Relations, his Brother and Sister. He gave the Priesthood, which was the most considerable Honour in that Nation, away to his Brother *Aaron's* Family, contenting himself, that his own Post-
erity should only be ranked among the ordinary Levites. And at his Death disposed of the Government to *Joshua*, a Stranger. Neither is it credible, that he would make Use of such a mean Trick as this, which was so easy to be discovered by every bold Man, whose Curiosity might prompt him to venture the Menaces, especially when he had established sufficiently in them an Opinion of his miraculous Power, by all the Wonders which he had done in *Egypt*, and at the red Sea.

2. Nor is there any tolerable Ground for this Supposition of a *Vulcano's* being formerly in Mount *Sinai*. I know your Brother-Infidels make a mighty Noise with this Story, but I believe they have very little Authority for it. I have seen several Draughts and Descriptions of this Mountain in Books of Travels, but never found any Thing which made for this Story. The likest Matter, which ever I could find, and which might perhaps give Countenance to this Assertion, is a Relation I find in the * Travels of *Christophorus Furerus*, a German Knight. And he in the Description of St. Catherine's Hill, which is nigh *Sinai*, has these Words : *In valle propinquâ Collis est miri aspectus, quasi totus exustus esset & cineribus tectus, quo loco Mosen ovium socii sui pascendarum curam habuisse memorant.* In the neighbouring Valley there is a Hill which is wonderful to look upon, appearing as if it was all burnt and covered with Ashes ; in which Place, they say, *Moses* kept his Father-in-Law's Sheep. Now unless it can be supposed that this Hill was Mount *Sinai*, it will signify nothing. But the same *Furerus* gives a particular

* Itinerarium Christophori Fureri. Printed at Nörimberg, 1621.

Description of *Sinai* in the following Chapter; and therefore, that can be none of the Hill which he before described. This is in all Probability some little Hill nigh St. Catharines and Mount *Sinai*, whose Earth is of a blackish Colour, and Barren, not unlike many of our Heaths. And this is all the Ground I can find they have for the *Volcano* of *Sinai*. But supposing that little barren Hill were Mount *Sinai*, they very little understand the Nature of a *Volcano*, to think there should remain no other Marks of it, than only a black Ground like Ashes. Read but the Descriptions of Mount *Etna* in *Polybius* and *Strabo*, and you will strait be of another Mind. For all such burning Mountains have an open Mouth on Top of them, through which they belch out their Flames, which the Ancients called the *Crater*; because the disgorged Cinders and melted Metals of Mount *Etna*, being hardened about the Brims of the *Hiatus*, did resemble the Lips of a Pitcher. Now 'tis impossible there should be a burning Mountain without such a *Crater*, or *Hiatus*; which would needs appear after the Fire was gone out, in the Figure of a monstrous Gap unto the End of the World.

3. Nay this Appearancie of God, or of an Angel representing him, in Flames of Fire, with Earthquake, Thunder, &c. is very agreeable to all the ancient Theology. For my Part, I am of Opinion with many of the Ancients, that it was a superior Angel that personated God, and not the second Person of the Trinity, as some. And this is more agreeable to Scripture, as when it is said; Gal. iii. 19. *That the Law was given by Angels in the Hand of a Mediator, (i.e.) Moses.* And so *Josephus* remarks of his Nation; * *We have received of God the best and holiest Parts of our Law by Angels.* And so the Author of the Questions to the Orthodox, † *The Angels which spoke in God's stead to Men, were called after God's Name, as the Angel which spoke to Jacob and to Moses: Nay, sometimes Men are called Gods. To both these it is granted to possess God's Name*

* Antiq. Hist. Lib. 15.

+ In Just. Martyr's Works:

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and his Place, by reason of the Office which is intrusted to them. But when their Office expires, they then cease to be called Gods, because they received that Compellation only for the sake of the Office. And therefore *Jamblicus* * calls the Heroes and Dæmons αὐτοπίκται τετράπλα, Spirits that appear for themselves to Men; whilst the superior Spirits have their Representatives. And so *Socrates* † could not believe that the Gods did appear δι' οἰκείων, and said all were Pretenders and Cheats who affirmed it. Now that when great Angels appeared, very great Flames of Fire were seen, and great Commotion in the Things about happened, may be known from the Words of an Heathen Author, and who is therefore more unexceptionable. || *As often as Archangels appear, certain Parts of the World are shaken, and a fore-running Light ushers them in; and according to the Large-ness of their Empire, is the Largeness of their preceding Light proportioned.* And so again afterward, *The Archangels are full of an excessive Splendor; Angels have some Light, and Dæmons a turbid one, &c.* And again he says, Archangels Fire is undivided, that of Dæmons is divided, and more circumscribed; and the Fire of the *Archontes*, the higher they are, is the brighter. And so God himself is represented by the Ancients as dwelling, or inclosed in Fire. So *Orpheus* in his Hymns:

Σῶς Δὲ θεῖνα πυργένη παρεσάσι πολύμοχθοι
"Ἄγγελοι —

*For round thy burning Throne attending stand
Crowds of Angelick Orders —*

And so the Chaldaick Oracles:

"Ηρίκη βλέψις μορφῆς ἀτερ ἐνεργήν πῦρ
Δαιμόνιον σκητισέν ὅλος καὶ βένδεα κόσμος,
Κλῦσι πυρὸς φωνή.

* Iamb. de Mysteriis, Sect. 2. Cap. 3.

† Plutarch de Genio Socratis.

|| Iamb. de Mysteriis, Sect. 2. Cap. 4.

*When you shall see the shapeless sacred Fire
With dancing Gleams shining quite through the World,
Then hear the Voice from out the Fire.*

And to the same Purpose that Oracle which is extant in * *Cedrenus* and *Malela*, and corrected by the learned Dr. Gale :

'Εστι νατ' ἀγενίοιο δῆς μεγάλοιο βεληνός.
Φέρετος ταρπεῖαλλον καὶ αἰναρού, αἰδάνατον πῦρ
'Ο τερψίει πᾶν, &c.

*There does from the capacious Heaven descend
Vast and Eternal Light, Immortal Fire,
Which all Things tremble at, Earth, Heaven, Sea,
With the Tartarian Vaults ; which Demons dread ;
Fatherless Father of all Things, alone,
Father and Son to his eternal Self,
Born of himself, untaught, unchangeable,
His Nature inaccessible to Reason,
His Habitation Fire ; and this is God,
Of whom we Angels are a slender Part ;
And now in Silence from our Altars go.*

Now this Notion was so frequent in the most ancient and oriental Theology, that it might possibly give Original to the Worship of the Fire among the *Chaldeans* and *Persians*; to those *Magi* among the *Cappadocians*, called *Pyrethi*, which *Strabo* † makes mention of; to the Vestal Fires among the *Greeks* and *Romans*, and the like Custom among the || *Britains*. Therefore the Unbelievers shew a great deal of Ignorance, when they tax this Relation of *Moses* representing God's appearing on the Mount in a Flame of Fire, with any Incongruity, or invent any

* Not. in *Jamblichum*, pag. 300. † Lib. 15. || *Solinus*, Cap. 35.

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groundless Stories to account for it ; seeing this is nothing but what is agreeable to the ancient Divinity, and the usual Sentiments of most Nations in the World. And so as for the Earth-quake, or shaking of the Mountain, it is no more than what all Nations have thought has come to pass at the Presence of God. As *Psal. lxviii. 8.* *The Earth shook, the Heavens also dropped at the Presence of God.* And *Psal. civ. 32.* *He looketh on the Earth, and it trembleth.* And *Virgil* in his Description of the Approach of *Phœbus*, does in a manner but translate the Words of *Moses*.

— *tremere omnia visa repente,*
Liminaque Laurusque Dei : totusque moveri
Mons circum, & mugire adytis cortina reclusis.

— *all Things do seem to quake,*
The Doors and Laurels of the God do shake ;
The tott'ring Mountain moves in Eddies round,
And from the Curtain creeps a hollow Sound.

So whenever the Coming of *Hecate* is described, as in *Theocritus's Pharmaceutria*, &c. Or when any great Deity appears, as that great *Demogorgon* which *Lucan* mentions, *Lib. 3.* the Earth is always said to tremble.

— *paretis, an ille*
Compellandus erit, quo nunquam terra vocata
Non concussa tremit —

But after all, here was not the least Ground to suspect any Deceit in this wonderful Occurrence ; for *Moses* deals very openly with the *Israelites* in this Matter, and suffers them to come up into the Mountain after the *LORD* had departed thence. And there is a Signal given them when they shall venture to come. *When the Trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the Mount.* Exod. xix. v. 13.

Now

Now if there had been any Thing of this pretended *Vulcanso* in the Mountain that *Moses* had cheated them with, to be sure *Moses* had forbid them to come up to the Mountain altogether ; for their viewing those natural Eruptions afterwards would have laid open the Cheat as much, as if they had been present, when *Moses* gave out he was receiving his Law from God, who exhibited himself in that Appearance.

Phil. But still, *Credentius*, there is another of this Legislator's Actions, which sticks much in my Stomach ; and that is his making the *Jews* believe, that by a divine Power he turned the Waters of the Red-Sea into two solid Walls standing up on each Side of the *Israelites*, to let them pass through upon the dry Ground. But to say nothing of the Pleasantness of this Miracle : Methinks this was but a Cast of the Legislator's Cunning, to coin a Miracle out of the Sea's Low-water. For it is a Tradition among the *Egyptians*, that *Moses* being a little more subtile than the ignorant *Jews*, or the *Egyptians* which pursued him, understood the exact Time of the Tide of that Sea, and so carried over upon the Ebb his People safe, whilst the *Egyptians* were lost for lack of better Observation. * Which Thought so wrought upon the learned *Josephus*, that he allowed the same to be done by *Alexander*, in passing the *Pamphylian* Sea. Or however this Miracle is much lessened, if we assert with a great many of the Divines, that the *Jews* did not cross the Sea ; but only went in a little Way, and came out again on the same Side ; and then ignorant Folks that lived far off from the Sea, might be imposed upon at the same Rate, every Time 'tis Low-water with us.

Cred. It is a Wonder at this Time of Day that you witty Gentlemen, who are endeavouring to settle all Things upon a new Bottom, should he beholden to one of old *Porphyry*'s Cavils to bespatter our Religion ; or to an idle Tale of the *Egyptians*. But in answer to these Insinuations,

* Ant. Lib. 2. Cap. ult.

The Israelites did not pass round the Head of the Sinus.

1. I am of Opinion, there is no Reason to think, but that the *Israelites* passed quite through the Chanel of the Sea from one Shore to the other. For the only Reason which gave Rise to the other Opinion, was the Relation of the Journeys of the People, *Numb. xxiii.* where, v. 6, it is said that they departed from *Succoth*, which is on the *Egyptian's* Side of the Red-Sea, and pitched in *Etham*, and from thence moved to *Pi-hahiroth*, *passed through the midst of the Sea into the Wilderness, and so went three Days Journey into the Wilderness of Etham.* Whence they conclude that *Etham*, and the Wilderness of *Etham*, must needs be on the same Side of the Sea; and consequently the *Jews* did not march cross the Sea, but only through one Side of it, in a Semi-circle, and out again a little higher on the same Side. But this is contrary to the express Words of Scriptnre, which say, *they passed through the Middle of the Sea.* And as for the Difficulty about *Etham*, that is fairly solved, by allowing only two *Ethams*, the one a Town which they encamped at, on the *Egyptian* Side, the second on the *Arabian* Side, a Wilderness. Instances of which are common enough in Scripture and prophane Histories. But if we must needs have the Wilderness of *Etham* denominated from the Town, Mr. *Le Clerc* * has ingeniously guessed that *Etham*, the Town, was situated nigh the upper Part of the *Sinus Arabicus*, and gave Denomination to a great Desert which surrounded the Head of that Bay, and reached down a considerable Way on both Sides. So that tho' they marched from the Wilderness of *Etham* cross the Bay, they would be only in another Part of the Wilderness of *Etham* still.

The Waters did not stand erect.

2. Neither do I see any Reason to assert that the Waters were miraculously consolidated; or that they did in a literal Sense stand on *an Heap*, or erect like a Wall. But only God sent a *strong Wind*, as the Text says, which blew back the Tide and all the Waters, which covered the Sands over against *Pi-hahiroth*, farther towards the Ocean; leaving some Waters stagnating towards the Head of the

* *Dissert. de Maris Idumæi traject.*

Sinus, all along towards the Mediterranean Sea. So that by this means the Sholes about *Pi-hahiroth* must needs be left dry, for the *Israelites* to pass over: Indeed it must be a *North Wind* which must produce this Effect, or at least a *North-East*; whereas our Translation says, an *East*. But there is no Necessity of translating *Cadim* *East*, it signifying only a *strong Wind*. And so St. *Jerom* interprets it, *ventum vehementem & urentem*, a *vehement and burning Wind*. And *Psal. xlvi. 7. Thou breakest the Ships of Tarsis with a Kadim*, the LXX. translate it *, *πεντάλε βιλαιω*, with a *mighty Wind*. Vid. *Ez. xxvii. 26. Job xxvii. 21. Jer. xviii. 17*. And then this Explication will be very agreeable to the Words of the Text, and that Division which is assigned to the Waters there. *And the Lord caused the Sea to go back by a strong East-Wind all that Night, and made the Sea dry Land, and the Waters were divided*, *Exod. xiv. 21*. Now as for those Words in the Song of *Moses* and *Miriam*, where it is said, that the *Flonds stood upright as an Heap, and the Depths were congealed in the Heart of the Sea*, that must be taken only as a poetical or metaphorical Expression. And where it is said that the *Waters were a Wall unto them*, it must be understood only that there were Waters on both Sides the Sholes they passed over. *And this is agreeable to the Expression in the Prophet Nahum, Art thou better than No-ammon, or populous No, that was situate among the Waters, that had Waters round about it, whose Rampart was the Sea, and whose Waters were a Wall?* *Nah. iii. 8.*

3. Nor did this come to pass by any natural Wind, *Not beat back by a natural Wind.* but by a miraculous one, which the Scripture says was sent immediately by God, for that Purpose. For no Histories give Account, that ever since that Time, the Waters were so blown out, which must have often come to pass, if the Cause had been natural; nay more frequently of late than formerly, the Waters of all *Creeks* and *Sinus's* being more shallow in these later Ages of the World, than in the Centuries which were nigher to the Deluge. But if

* Vid. Cler. Diff.

such Ebbs had been so natural and frequent as the Infidels pretend, it was impossible that *Moses* could have put such a Banter upon so great a Multitude, who could not have all been ignorant of the Tide of so neighbouring a Sea, nor would the *Egyptians* have ventured into the Danger of a Sea, the Time of whose Return they must needs know as well as *Moses*. Nay, it is impossible, that such a great Army should be drowned by the coming back of an ordinary Tide, and that *there should not remain so much as one of them*. It must therefore be allowed, that God kept the Waters back by this preter-natural Wind, till the *Israelites* were passed over, and then suffered them to return back upon the *Egyptians*, in their full Fury.

Alexan-
der's Pas-
sing the
Pamphy-
lian
Streights,
no Parallel.

4. It does not make any Thing against the Truth of this Miracle, that *Alexander* passed his Army over the Streights of the *Pamphylian Sea*; for those Streights are naturally dry at every low Water; which I believe *Josephus* was ignorant of, which made him compare it with this great Occurrence in the Mosaical Expedition. Now of that Matter *Strabo* writes thus*, *About Phaselis there are Streights towards the Sea, through which Alexander passed his Army. There is also a Mountain called Climax, which lies to the Pamphylian Sea, leaving a streight Passage to the Shore, which is quite bare, in good Weather; but when the Waves arise, it is for the most Part covered with them. Now the Road by the Mountains is about, and difficult, and therefore in calm Weather they go by the Shore. Now Alexander came thither in stormy Weather, and trusting to his Fortune, would go over before the Waves were abated, which made his Souldiers go all Day up to the Navel in Water.* And much to the same Purpose does *Plutarch* speak †. This March through Pamphylia has been a Subject to many Historians of mighty Wonder, and fine Declamation, as if the Sea, by order of the Gods, gave Place to Alexander, which almost always is a rough Sea there, and does very rarely open a smooth Way under those broken Rocks. And this Menander hints at in his Comedy, speaking of a Wonder, ὡς Ἀλεξανδρὸς τένω, &c.

* Strab. Lib. 14.

† Plutar. Vit. Alexandri.

But Alexander himself in his Epistles speaks of no Miracle, but only says he passed by Climax as he came from Phaselis. Now 'tis plain this was no Miracle, by the joint Authority of these two excellent Historians, who make the Passage there an ordinary Thing; but the Mosaick Transit must remain a Miracle still, till you can find as good Historians to vouch for the same Commonness of a Passage through the Red-Sea.

5. As for your alledging the Tradition of the *Ægyptians* making this Miracle only a Trick of *Moses*: I think there is little to be built upon the Credit of the *Ægyptian* Traditions, which if hearkened to, would fill all History full of Fable. And they are less to be depended upon, when they seem to be set up on Purpose to discredit the Nation of the *Jews*, whom they had such a mortal Enmity to, and whom to discredit they coined so many Lies, as appears by the Books of *Manetho*, *Lysimachus*, &c. Well, but what is this *Ægyptian* Tradition? It is only a Report of the *Memphites*, which was as strongly opposed by the *Heliopolitans*. As appears from the Fragment of *Artapanus*'s History of the *Jews**. Now the *Memphites* (says he) tell, that *Moses*, who was well acquainted with all the Country, knowing the Time when the Tide would be out, carried over all the Multitude when the Sea was dry. But the *Heliopolitans* say otherways, That the King followed the *Jews* going away with what they had borrowed from the *Ægyptians*, bringing with him a great Army and his holy Animals. But *Moses* was commanded by a divine Voice to strike the Sea with his Rod; he touched the Sea with his Rod, and the Waves giving Place, he led over his Forces in a dry Tract. Now set this Tradition of the *Heliopolitans*, which is very agreeable to the Letter of Scripture, and that of the *Memphites*, which seems only to be a groundless Cavil against the *Jews*, both together; and what do they make more for the Infidels than the Believers? And why are the *Memphites* to be believed against the Scripture-History, more than the *Heliopolitans* for it? But there is no Won-

* Vid. Clem. Alex. Strom. Lib. 1. Euseb. Prep. Lib. 9. Cap. 27.

der to be made, but that there would be Variety of Traditional Stories in the Neighbourhood about such a wonderful Occurrence as this. And thus we find a like Story among the *Ichthyophagi*, who were situated not far off from that Place of the Red-Sea, where the *Israelites* in Probability went over, being over against Mount Sinai, thus related by * *Diodorus Siculus*, ὁδὶ τοῖς ἀλησθεσίοις.

Among the Ichthyophagi, who live hard by, this History is handed down by Tradition from their Forefathers, that once there was a mighty Ebb of the Sea, so that every Place of this Bay was dry, which then looked green, the Sea flowing to the contrary Parts. But when the Earth had for some Time appeared, there then came again a great Tide, and made the Bay as it was before. So that you see, *Philologus*, that these Traditions of the *Egyptians* are so far from discrediting the Truth of this Mosaical Miracle, that they tend much to support it. It not being to be supposed, that the Tradition of such a remarkable Action should be totally lost in the Country where it was performed; or that it should be handed down with all the Particulars of Truth, with which he that did it himself has related it. And besides, if you consult the Descriptions of this Bay given by *Belon*, *Furerus*, *Thevenot*, &c. you will not find that any such Reflux ever happens there now, or that, tho' there be some Shoals which incommod the Ships, Men can at any Time pass over upon dry Ground.

Phil. This is pretty plausible, Sir; but pray how will you be able to excuse his Laws from the Absurdities which they abound with? Now these stab the Jewish Religion to the Heart; for how can those Laws have God Almighty for their Author, which do not so much as seem to be composed by wise Men? I cannot stay to run through his whole System of Laws; but for my Part I look upon a great Number of them to be absurd and ridiculous, others contrary to common Justice, and the rest but mean and pitiful, and unworthy of God the Author. What more silly than the Command of not

* Hist. Fab. Lib. 3.

Eating the Blood of an Animal? as if it was worth the Cognisance of a Legislator to forbid Men the Use of Black-Puddings. Is it worthy a divine Law to forbid the sowing of Maslin, or that poor Folks should wear Linsey-wolsey? And does it not look a little like a Jest gravely to establish, that an Ox and an Ass shall not be yoked together? Besides, there are other Things in the Body of his Laws, which contradict the common Notions of ordinary Justice. What is the setting up in his Common-wealth so many *Asylums*, but only making a Rendezvous, or an *Alsatia*, for a Number of Hedge-Rogues to plague their honest Neighbours? His *Lex Talionis* is unmerciful Cruelty; that when I by Chance, or in a Scuffle, have beat out a Man's Eye, I must stand still to let him bore out mine in cold Blood. His Redemption of Estates, after the Year of Jubilee, is to discourage good Parts and Industry, and to entail Estates for ever, it may be, upon the Block-headed Heirs of those particular Families which first laid Hands upon them. His other Laws about *Murder*, *Theft*, *Sacrifices*, &c. are such as are equalled by the meanest Common-wealths, and the ordinariest Superstitions; only here are some Things more ridiculous than are to be found elsewhere, with a deal of Injunctions about Red-Cows, Scape-Goats, and forty Things more of the same Nature. But if God had been the Author of these Laws, and this Institution, they had without all Doubt been grounded upon admirable Reason, excellently fitted to the Benefit of Mankind, and the Usefulness of them to Society, and to make Men good would have been apparent to all that considered them; but these seem only to be an odd Jumble of arbitrary Precepts; for which there is no other but a Woman's Reason to be given, *Because, forsooth, God would command them.* And is not this a fine Way of making Laws —

Cred. I find you are running, *Philologus*, upon your old Strain, and therefore I must beg Leave to interpose a little. I believe it is Want of due Consideration of the Laws of *Moses*, which makes you talk against that, which when

*The Jewish
the best of
all political
Laws.*

when you understand better, you would rather admire. For my Part, I look upon the Judaical to be the most excellent civil Constitution which ever was, or ever will be in the World ; and if you will but compare the three Legislative Books of *Moses*, with what are extant of the *Egyptian*, *Athick*, and *Lacedemonian* Laws, the *Roman* twelve Tables, their *Plebisita*, and Imperial Rescripts, nay even when they were collected into the Digests, you will find, that they all fall short of these Laws of *Moses*. I do not speak this at Random, nor in the least to detract from the *Roman* Laws ; but considering the Circumstances of the Jewish Nation, their Laws do, I think, far exceed the other. Indeed the Jewish Laws were not drawn up into such an exact systematical Method, nor adorned with such artificial Terms, nor do so precisely set out the minute Boundaries of Right and Wrong, as the *Roman* ; but yet they are better calculated for ordinary Justice and neighbourly Society ; and what is better yet, for *Mercy* and *Charity* : I say *Mercy* and *Charity*, and I defy any civil Constitution in the World to shew so many good-natur'd Laws, and enacted with such a tender Regard to their Fellow-Creatures, as the *Jews* can. What more kind Constitution could there be, than to ordain Cities of Refuge for the innocent Man-slayer to fly to, to avoid the impotent Anger of the Relations of the killed, which according to the Custom of those Times, were wont immediately to revenge their Kindred's Death ; thereby to give him Time to clear himself : which if he could not, the Law allows him to be dragged even from the Horns of the Altar, *Exod.* xxi. 14. The kind Usage which by those Laws is to be given to Slaves, and the Stripes which are not to be exceeded in punishing Criminals, are another Argument of the Mercifulness of these Laws above others. The great Care which is taken to prevent Mischief which might happen by the flat-roof'd Buildings of those Times, by ordering Battlements to be made round them ; and the Penalty of Women's taking abortive Potions, do confirm the same. The forbidding

The extra-
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the

the Jews to suffer a Beggar among them, and not allowing new married Men to be forced from their Wives the first Year to the Wars, are a Tenderness which most other Nations are wanting in. Indeed the same Laws punish *Adultery* with Death, but then they are so mild as to punish *Theft* with only abundant Restitution. In which Sanctions you may see an admirable Temperament of Justice and Clemency ; and which may serve for an Example to other Governments, where Adulteries, which are irreparable, are pretended to be recompensed by pecuniary Mulcts ; and Thefts, for which Restitution may be made, are Capital. Nay, in these Laws there is a tender Regard had to Beasts themselves, of which the forbidding to muzzle the Mouth of the Ox that treadeth out the Corn, is a sufficient Instance ; mercifully providing, that the poor Beast which provides Sustenance for us, should not be denied its natural Cravings after its own. And so it is in the Case of the Coupling an Ox and an Ass, and other *τερέσσυα*, tenderly taking Care, that one Beast of greater Strength should not force another poor Creature of less Toil beyond its Ability. Thus much I have thought fit in some few Particulars to point out the merciful Disposition of these Laws, which is not so visible in any civil Constitution in the World as in this.

And besides, you may perceive as much Wisdom and *The great Wisdom in them.* excellent Design running through the whole Frame of it. The *Distinction of Families*, and *Registry* of their Names, was the most useful Thing which could be in a Commonwealth ; thereby to know its own Strength and Abilities, to prevent Law-suits, and to settle Inheritances. The *sabbatical or fallow Year* was a noble Contrivance to keep a Country in Fertility, and from being worn out of Heart by covetous Tillers. The weekly *Sabbath*, setting aside the Religiousness of it, was a wonderful Ease both to Servants and Cattle, and must even upon this Account be esteemed a very wise Establishment, which other Nations were wanting in. But their severe *Punishment of Idolatry* of all Sorts, and the great Encouragement of the Worship of the one true God, from whom the whole World had

had relapsed, is such a Glory of the Judaical Laws above all other; as can never be eclipsed by all that can be said against them by Infidel Tongues. Talk what you will of your *Solon's*, *Lycurgus's* and *Numa's*; but the idolatrous Worships which they established by their Laws, is enough to ruin their Character in the Opinion of all sober Deists; whilst they must needs have a secret Esteem for the Jewish Legislator, in setting the Worship of the one true God among his People alone, in opposition to the whole idolatrous World. Nay, that *hostile odium*, which the Historian calls their Aversion to a free Conversation with other Nations which their Law obliged them to, was that which preserved both their Religion and their Laws from the encroaching Powers of their neighbouring Potentates: For if they had wanted this, they had been lost in their *Babylonian Captivity*, and for ever mixed with that idolatrous Nation. And truly this Surliness was such a good Piece of Policy among the *Jews*, that we *English-men*, in the midst of our Complaisance, should not do amiss to learn, who have so long been fond of fetching over the Customs of a neighbouring Nation, that they seeing us so very obliging, were once in a fair Way to have sent us over their Government and Religion too.

*Objections
against
particular
Laws an-
swered.*

As to your Exceptions which you have raised against some particular Instances in the Mosaical Law, I think they are not very material. The Forbidding of the *Blood of Animals* for Food was a *Noachical Precept*, as well as Mosaical; which God by a new Sanction thought fit under *Moses's Dispensation* to continue. And at the first giving of it in *Noah's Time*, it was a very proper Injunction, and highly rational: For God at the same Time gave Mankind a License to eat the Flesh of Animals, excepting only the Blood. This being as it were a Kind of Sacrament or Token, to put them in Mind of the Tenderness they ought to have in shedding human Blood; as appears by the Context, where Murder is forbidden, and Blood is required for Blood. As to your Objection against the Law of sowing *mixed Seed*, I presume the Reason which *Philo* gives is sufficient, that the Strength of

the

the Ground might not be worn out thereby, and no Encouragement given to the Husbandman's Covetousness. The wearing *Linsley-woolsey* was probably a proud fantastick Fashion of the Heathens at that Time, which therefore the *Jews* were forbid to imitate. Though further, I believe all the three Conjunctions mentioned, *Deut. xxii.* of yoking the Ox with an Afs, the mingling of Seeds, and wearing Linen mixed with Woollen have, as *Theodore* observes, something *Emblematical* mixed with the Precept, to make Men have the greater Abhorrence of all venereal Commixtures contrary to Nature. As for the *Lex Talionis* of the *Jews*, let it have been as rigid as you would make it, it is no more than what was practised in other Nations, and had a Place among the celebrated *Roman Laws* in the twelve Tables. And as it is set down in * *Aulus Gellius*, is thus; *SI MEMBRUM. RUPERIT. NI. CVM. EO. PACIT. TALIO. ESTO.* But the *Jews* say that for Mutilations where Death did not ensue, a pecuniary Mulct was generally accepted and granted to the maimed Person; and that the Judge did never inflict the *Talio*, but upon the Desire of the injured Party, who, unless he were very malicious, would rather accept a Recompence in Money. And so for the *Return* of mortgaged Estates to the Owners at the Jubilee, there is no Manner of Injustice in this Law, because the Estate could be sold for no more Money than an Annuity, from the Time of Sale till the Year of Jubilee, was worth, and it was at the Purchaser's Peril if he ventured more upon it. And there was Encouragement enough for Men of Parts and Industry to raise themselves by Purchase only of Annuities for fifty Years: Nay farther, this Law seems to be excellently contrived to hinder the encroaching Purchases of covetous Men, which have given so much Disturbance in all Common-wealths, and which occasioned the *Leges Agrarie* which gave such great Content to the *Roman* Citizens. So *Aristotle* in his Politicks says ||, that Solon

* Noct. Attic. Lib. 20. cap. 1. + Liv. Hist. Lib. 4. cap. 48.
Lib. 6. cap. 11. 14. || Arist. Pol. Lib. 2. cap. 7.

A CONFERENCE

made a Law, and that other Countries have the same, that every Man should not purchase as much Estate as he had a Mind to. And again*, The Law forbids to sell a Man's Household-goods; as the Law of the Locri, which obliges a Man not to sell them, unless he can make it out that some great Calamity has befallen him. Besides, the Law command to keep those ancient Patrimonies which came by Inheritance. And so again in another Place. In many Cities it is established by Law, that no one should have Power to alienate the ancient Inheritances. And there is a Law which is said to be of Oxylus, which enjoins that no one should lend Money to another, and take his Estate as a Pawn for it. So that if this be a Fault in the Mosaical Laws, the Attick and Roman are liable to the same Censure. As for the red Heifer which is commanded to be sacrificed, Numb. xix. 2. the Reason most probably is, that such an one is more beautiful and choice, such as the Ancients made use of for Sacrifice; of which † Plutarch says the Egyptians were so scrupulous, that if a red Bull had but one black or white Hair, he was unfit for Sacrifice. And lastly, for the Scape-Goat, I take that to be an expiatory Sacrifice, purposely designed to be a Type of our blessed Saviour, and was expiatory only by Relation to his Sufferings.

Phil. For my Part I have no great liking to your Types and Figures; but why should not these Laws be given in Opposition to the Zabii, those ancient Idolaters, which learned Men of late have found out; and from whose Doctrines methinks they give a pretty handsome *Rationale* of the Mosaick Laws?

Cred. Let this *Rationale* be as pretty as you please, I believe it is very false, and that there were never any more such a Nation as the Zabii, than the Utopians. They never had any more Being than in the Dreams of the falsifying Jews, who four or five hundred Years ago wrote some Sham-Books, under their Name. I do not doubt but that Maimonides saw them, and was imposed upon by

* Id. Lib. 6. cap. 4. † Plut. de Isid. & Osyr.

them,

them, so that the Cheat does not lie at his Door. The *Zabii* *, among the ancient *Arabians*, were esteemed a Name for Sorcerers or Fortune-tellers, and signified no more than the *Chaldaeī* † in Latin, and the *Gypsies* in English. And thus 'tis used in the *Alcoran* ||: and *Abul-Pharajius*, set out by Dr. *Pocock*, says, their *Profession was the same with that of the ancient Chaldeans*. Now should not we make pretty Work of it, if we should go to give an Account of the old *Ægyptian* Rites and Customs, and the *Coptick* Language, from the Lies and Cant of our vagrant *Gypsies*? And truly the Case is the very same of those Books which *Maimonides* relies upon, that pretend to give an Account of the old *Chaldean Idolaters* in *Abraham's* and *Moses's* Time, and to be wrote as long ago as that. Now if these *Zabian* Books ‡, which *Maimonides* and his Followers so much rely upon, prove to be Forgeries, then all this *Zabian Hypothesis* falls to the Ground. Now these *Zabian* Books which *Maimonides* saw, were one called *Haistamchus*, another *Hattel-eshmaoth*, or of speaking *Images*; another called *Tamtam*, another named *Hasscharubb*, another of the Degrees of the celestial Orbs, and of the ascendant Figures in each Degree, another Book of speaking *Images*, a certain Book attributed to *Hermes*, a Book wrote by *Isaac the Zabian*, which disputes for the Law of the *Zabians*, and his great Book of the Customs and Particularities of the *Zabians*: Besides another Book of Agriculture. Now is not this a pretty Library of Books, for the *Abrahamic* and *Mosaical* Times? But if they are so ancient as is pretended, how came they never to be heard of, but among the *Jews* in *Ægypt*, or *Spain*, about four or five hundred Years ago? One would have thought, that some of the Writers of the Old, or New Testament, should have spoke of some of them, or some of the learned Fathers, who understood the Orientals, as St. *Jerom* and *Origen*, who were so inquisitive this Way, methinks they should have somewhere mentioned them. But, to go no

* *Aul. Gellius*, Lib. 4. cap. 1. † *Az.* 2. || *Hist. Dyn.* p. 281.

‡ *Vid. Maimon. More Nevoch.* Part III. cap. 29.

farther, some of these Books carry Forgery in their very Titles. The Book of *Speaking Images* looks like the Stories of the *Talisman's* which the *Arabian* talks so much of about that Time. The Book of *celestial Orbs and Ascendants* looks like a Forgery about *Rambam's* Time, when the Follies of Judicial Astrology among the *Arabians* were at the Height. But *Isaac the Zabian* was infatuated to give himself that Name, pretending to be older than *Abraham*, and yet take his Son's Name. Or however, his Jewish Name must needs tell all the World, he was no *Zabian*. And besides *Isaac*, in his great Book, treats of the Temples dedicated by the *Zabii* to *Intellectual Forms*; whence any Body would know the Book to be wrote by some one, who had been bred in a School of the Peripatetick Philosophy. And the Disputes in those Books about the Eternity of the World shew, they were compiled by some one, who had been where *Aristotle's* Arguments upon that Subject had been bandied about. I should weary you, to tell you all the simple Tales which *Maimonides* quotes out of these Books; which are all composed in the very Strain of the *Talmud*; from whence any Body may guess their Original. They make *Abraham* very doughtily disputing with a great King of the *Zabians*, That there is another God besides the *Sun*, and that the *Sun* is but the Hatchet in the Hand of God. For which the King claps *Abraham* up into Prison; but notwithstanding that, *Abraham* disputes there still; so that the King at last fearing, lest *Abraham* should do Mischief among his People by his subtle Disputations, seizes all his Goods, and banishes him to the farther Part of the East. Now does this look like a *Zabian*, or rather not like a *Jew*, who had a Mind to aggrandize the great Parts of his Progenitor? Besides, the Foolishness of that Writer is betrayed, by making such great Monarchies in those Ages of the World, when Kingdoms were generally confined to Cities, or small Provinces, as appears by *Abraham's* fighting half a Score of such Kings with 318 Men. The same Books tell you strange Tales of *Adam*, and *Seth*, and *Noah*, &c. which plainly shew them to be wrote by one,

one, who was acquainted with the Mosaick Genealogy. That *Adam* was the Apostle of the Moon, and exhorted Men to her Worship ; that *Seth* was a Renegado to his Father's Worship, and so was *Noah*, who condemned Image-worship. That *Adam* went into a far Country nigh *India*, and brought home a Tree with Flowers, Leaves, and Branches of Gold ; and likewise a Tree of Stone, with the Leaves of another green Tree, whose Leaves would not burn in the Fire ; that was so large, that ten thousand Men of the Bigness of *Adam* might shelter themselves under it, and that the two Leaves which he brought with him were so large, that each of them would cloath two Men. But I will tire you no longer with these insipid *Talmudical* Lies, which methinks any Body might guess a Jew to be the Author of. But however, what rare Stuff is this to explain Scripture by ? One would wonder how it should come into the Heads of learned Men, to think, that God in framing his sacred Laws, should have any Regard to such idle Tales. For my Part, I pity them, when I see them so sweating themselves in such a silly Enterprise, and throwing away so much Labour and Learning to no Manner of Purpose ; and besides the great Advantage they give to the Infidels, to expose the Laws of God, when they see that Christians settle them upon so slender a Foundation.

Phil. It behoves you to be as zealous for your Religion as you can, for you find we get Ground upon you every Day. We live in a very prying Generation, and 'tis not laying your Hand over a sore Place in your Religion, that will secure it now, you must maintain your Cause by pure Dint of Argument, or lose it. But what say you now to your great Legislator, when we shall prove, that all his celebrated Religion which he pretended to give the *Jews* from Heaven, was only pinched from the Worship of the Heathen *Aegyptians*? And this your own Divines are sensible of at last, and, by Reason of the plain Evidence of the Case, have given over the Cause to us. For some of them have proved the Christian Religion to be all Jewish ; and others the Jewish Religion to

be derived from the Heathen: And therefore, for my Part, I am for taking my Religion at the Fountain-head, and so will continue a primitive Heathen in Defiance to all Innovation. I have nothing to say to Christianity, for the Judaical Laws are the Matter now in Hand; and these I say were most of them (the Ceremonial especially) nothing but *Ægyptian Rites*, which *Moses* brought over with him thence; which is a considerable Argument against the Divinity of them; for to be sure God Almighty would never have copied his Laws from a Parcel of simple Idolaters. To begin with Circumcision, which is pretended to be the Characteristick of the *Jews*, that to be sure was taken from the *Ægyptians*, or some other Nation; that Ceremony being used not only in *Ægypt*, but in *Æthiopia*, by the *Colchi* and *Arabians*. Thus the *Urim* and *Thummim* was enjoined in Imitation of that Locket of Jewels, which hung from the Neck of the *Ægyptian High-Priest*, mentioned by * *Diodorus Siculus*. The *Linen Garments*, which the Jewish High-Priest and other inferior ones wore, were copied from the *Ægyptian Priests* who wore the like, as *Herodotus* † and *Plutarch* ‡ relate. The *Cherubim* were only the Imitation of *Apis's Hieroglyphick* or Image, the Bull, or of those *σκεια πολύμορφα* so much in Fashion among the *Ægyptians*; as the Image of *Sphinx* upon their Temple-doors does evince. And so was the *Ark of the Covenant* fetched from the Use of the *Cista*, in the Rites of the *Ægyptian Osiris*, the *Orgia of Bacchus*, and the *Eleusinian Sacra*. The *Feasts of New Moons* were taken from the like Practice among the Heathens; and so were the Jewish *Purifications* from their *Lustrations*. And lastly, the Temple of *Jerusalem* was but a Copy of those *Ægyptians*, who are observed by *Herodotus* §, to be the first Authors of Altars, Images and Temples. And what I pray becomes of your Religion now, when the Foundation of it was borrowed, you see, from the most stupid of all the Heathen Idolaters, that

* Hist. Fab. Lib. 1. cap. 37. † Herod. Hist. Lib. 2. cap. 37.
‡ Plutarch de Iside & Osyr. § Herod. cap. 4.

fell down and worshiped the very Pot-herbs of their Garden?

Cred. I am heartily sorry that the learned Author *De Jewish Legibus Hebraeorum* has put a keen Sword into the Infidels' Hands, the better to attack Religion with, which their blunt Arguments would have been less able to do. Not ^{is not derived from the} *Ægyptian*. that I think, if Dr. Spencer's Supposition should be true, that the Judaical Rites were derived from the *Ægyptian*; that the Infidels would absolutely get the better of us. For 'tis possible that God Almighty might make such Condescensions to the Hardness of the Jews Hearts, and their slavish hankering after the Pomp of the *Ægyptian* Worships, as to allow them in some Particulars of their Ceremonies. But I think there is no Necessity of granting this; for all the Rites commanded by the Jewish Law seem either perfectly set up in Opposition to their Superstitions, or are such as were practised in common with them and the ancient Patriarchs, or else were such ordinary Performances in religious Worship, as no Nation could easily avoid. I confess, I am far from the other Opinion of those who assert, That the *Ægyptians*, and others of the Heathen World, learned all these religious Acts from the *Jews*, because some of them they might learn from their common Fore-Fathers, and others they might jump upon by Chance, or be led to them by the natural Tendency of the Thing. There are a thousand Things which Men do very much alike, and yet neither of them can be said to learn or copy from one another; nor can be so much as said to dream of what the other did. Indeed Men of Wit and Learning may make a Pother about them, shew their own Parts in maintaining a Paradox, and amuse unwary People; but they can make nothing solidly out in such a Matter. To make use of an odd Instance. I will undertake to take an ordinary Scrivener's Conveyance, that is drawn up after the most blundering Rate, and put it into a learned Hand that will vouchsafe to lay out Time this Way; and he shall fetch you parallel Cases for every Period or Word out of the Antiquities of *Greece* and *Rome*, bring like Quotations to

every Line out of the Codes and Pandects, alledge opposite Sayings out of *Tully* and *Demosthenes*, *Libanius* and *Themistius*; so that the Scrivener might almost seem to have stollen the Conveyance out of these Books: whereas perhaps the poor Man never heard a Word of them in all his Life. And truly I think Dr. Spencer's Book is but a Project of the same Nature. He finds that some Things in the Jewish and the Heathen Ceremonies agree, and therefore resolves the first was derived from the latter. Now 'tis an easy Thing for a learned Man, that has Leisure enough, to pick up out of such a Number of Heathen Books, which are extant, a great many Expressions in their Explication of Heathen Rites, which may make them look something like the Jewish Ceremonies; and yet in Reality they might be no more alike than the Scrivener's Conveyance to *Cicero's Oration pro Milone*. But to speak to the Particulars which you have mentioned:

Circumci-
cision not
from the
Ægyptians.

1. *Circumcision*, though it were not a Rite purely Judaical, yet it was first given to *Abraham*, and so descended down to all his Posterity; and as to what other Use of it there was in other Nations, it was learned from him and his Off-spring. As for the Use of Circumcision among all the *Ismaelitish* Race in *Arabia*, and among the *Edomites* and other Descendents from *Esau* and *Abraham's Sons by Keturah*, they being of the Seed of *Abraham* as well as the *Jews*, it is no Wonder that they maintained their paternal Rites as well as the other. As for the *Colchi*, *Grotius* has proved them to be probably of the ten Tribes carried away by *Salmanasser*; for the Scholiast upon *Aristophanes* declares, that they own themselves to be of Jewish Extraction. And if the Testimony of *Alexander Polyhistor*, quoted by *Josephus* *, be to be credited, that the Name of *Africa* came from *Afer*, the Son of *Abraham*, by *Keturah*, who planted a Colony there; then we have an easy Account how Circumcision came to the *Æthiopians* also. There remain then only the *Ægyptians*, and why they

* *Jos. Lib. 1. cap. 16.*

might not learn it from *Abraham*, or *Joseph*, especially when he was in his Grandeur in *Pharaoh's Court*, I confess I could never see any good Reason. Indeed it is something difficult to think, that a whole Nation should learn such a troublesome Rite of a Stranger. But the whole People of the *Ægyptians* were not circumcised, only the *Hierophantæ* and the Priests. * And they might take this up in Emulation to *Joseph*, that they might not seem to be outdone by him in any extraordinary Mark of Holiness; as the Magicians vied with *Moses* in pretending to do the same Miracles with him. And I take it to be plain, that no other Nation made use of an universal Circumcision of all their Males, but the *Jews* only. The *Ægyptians* had among them a Sort of a Female Circumcision mentioned by *Strabo*, a Custom never dreamt of among the *Jews*. And 'tis evident that the *Gentiles* generally believed that Circumcision was the Characteristick only of a *Jew*, or else those reproachful Names given to the *Jews* upon this Account, such as *verpus*, *reputitus*, *cyrinus*, &c. mentioned by *Juvenal*, *Martial*, and others, have no Sense in them; they being designed to stigmatise the *Jews* by them, for a particular Singularity in this Matter above other Nations; which if so many Nations, as you pretend, had used, there would be no Ground for. But we never find, that these odd Names were given to the *Ægyptians*, *Arabians*, the *Colchi*, or the *Æthiopians*; and therefore 'tis plain, that they were not universally circumcised, as the *Jews* were.

2. And so for the *Urim* and *Thummim*, although the *Nor Urim* Heathen *Ægyptians* might use something like it, yet 'tis more probable, as *Grotius* says, that they did it *ut pueri virorum res imitantur*, imitate this as Boys use to do what is done by Men; than that this Usage should be taken from the Heathen: This being the Custom of malicious Dæmons, to put their idolatrous Worshipers upon, as may be seen in many Particulars, as learned Men have proved at large. There are † two Authors which make mention

* Epiph. Hær. 30. † Diod. Hist. Fab. Lib. i. Ael. Var. Hist. Lib. 14. cap. 24.

of this analogous Rite of the *Ægyptians*, *Diodorus Siculus*, and *Ælian*. *Diodorus* says that the Chief Justice of *Ægypt* had an Image of precious Stones hanging from his Neck by a golden Chain, which they called *Alethea*, or Truth. And that the Causes then began, when the Chief Justice had fitted to himself this Image of Truth. And *Ælian* relates the same not much unlike. Of old among the *Ægyptians* the Priests were Judges. And the Chief Judge was the ancientest among them, who gave Judgment to all. Now he of all Men ought to be the most just and impartial. He had an Image about his Neck of Sapphire-stone, which was called the Image of Truth. And *Diodorus* adds farther, that after the Litigants had twice given their Libels to the Judges, then the thirty Judges confer among themselves, and the Chief Justice does *περιστέλλει τὸ ζώδιον τῆς ἀληθείας*, apply the Image of Truth to the other Side. Now in all this there is nothing so like the *Urim* and *Thummim*, as does necessarily evince that this Jewish Custom was derived from the *Ægyptians*. For in *Ægypt* this was the Ornament of the Chief Justice, among the *Jews* the Ensigns of the High-Priest. Among the *Jews*, it was a standing Oracle to consult in extraordinary Affairs of State, among the *Ægyptians* used in ordinary Justice. Nor does it appear to me, that this *Ægyptian Alethea* was any more, than an honorary Ensign of the chief Judge, who could not regularly perform his Office without it, and had nothing more Oracular in it than a Serjeant's Coif, or an Alderman's Chain. And *Petrus Vallensis*, in a Letter wrote from *Grand Cairo*, seems to have seen a Mummy of one of these old Judges, which does ascertain the Figure of the *Ægyptian Alethea*. Where he says he had seen a Mummy, about whose Neck a golden Collar was painted, hanging from his Neck like the Knights of the golden Fleece. And in the Middle, upon his Breast, was the Representation of a Plate of Gold, with the Figure of a Bird upon it, Epist. 18. Now this is very different from the *Urim* and *Thummim* of the High-Priest, which was made of Cloth beset with precious Stones. All the Difficulty is what *Diodorus* means by his *περιστέλλει*, by applying the *Alethea* to the contrary Side. Now since no

History mentions any Thing oracular in this ; we cannot fancy it more than only some *Hieroglyphical Memento* to the Judges, of the Regard they ought to bear to Justice and Truth ; or to the Witnesses or *Litigants*, which the Chief Justice did often exhibit to them, to put them in Mind of their Duty. But you will say, how then came the *Jews* to have an Usage so very like the *Egyptian*, if they did not learn it from thence ? Why, I answer, it was a common Ensign of Honour in all Nations, to wear a golden Chain, and many other People have used it as well as the *Jews* and the *Egyptians*. Thus not only *Pharaoh*, when he had a Mind to advance *Joseph* to Honour, and a Place of great Trust, put a Chain of Gold about his Neck, *Gen. xli. 42.* but the King of *Babylon* did the same to *Daniel*, *Dan. v. 29.* For as Crowns and Scepters in all Nations have been Ensigns of the Regal Authority ; so are Gold-Chains and Rings Tokens of the higher Honour, and used not only by the Eastern *Satrapæ*, but even by the noble *Gauls* in the West. As is evident by what * *Pliny* relates of the Rise of the Family of the *Torquati* at *Rome* from the first *Torquatus*, who was called so from killing a noble *Gaul*, and taking his Chain from him yet reeking with Blood, and putting it about his own Neck. Now what great Occasion for Wonder is there, that the Chief Justice of *Egypt* had a Chain, with a remarkable Medal appendant to it different from other Nobles ? Or why might not the Jewish High-Priest hang his Breast-plate by a golden Chain, without going to *Egypt* for the Invention ? For any other Nation could have taught that wonderful Contrivance as well as the *Egyptian*. And as to the Appendants, there is so little Agreement between them, viz. a Cloth a Span square beset with Jewels, and a golden Medal representing the Figure of a Bird, that one of these can hardly be said to have given Rise to the other.

* *Plin. lib. 32. c. 22.*

Priests Linen Garments not from Egypt.

3. As for your borrowing the Use of Linen only for the Garments of the Priests; I think the just contrary thereof is true, and that the Jews in this were rather perfectly opposite to the *Egyptians*, than their Imitators. The Breast-plate and Robe of the Jewish High-Priest were ordered to be made of Scarlet, Blue and purple woolen Cloth, only embroidered with Wreaths of fine Linen. But the Use of woolen Cloth was, as Plutarch says, execrable to the *Egyptian* Priests. *de Is. & Osyr.* And * Herodotus tells us, that they wore only Linen, and Shooes of the Papyrus, and that it is unlawful to them to use any other Garment or Shooes. But the Jewish High-Priest's Robes were rather like the *Babylonians*, than the *Egyptians*. For of the *Babylonians*, Herodotus writes thus, *This is the Fashion of their Clothing. They use a linen Garment down to their Ankles, over this they put on another of Wool, and over all a χλαυστον, a + kind of a short white Coat, which does exactly resemble the Ephod.* And besides he relates this of the Laity among the *Egyptians*, *That they wear linen Coats fringed about the Legs, which they call Calasyris, over this they put white woollen Garments, but they do not come into the Temples with them, nor are buried in them, that being profane.* Now to take all this together, it seems rather that Moses's Laws concerning the sacerdotal Robes, were given in pure Opposition to the *Egyptians*; by ordering that the Jewish High-Priest, the most sacred Person of all, should wear some of his Garments of Linen, and others of Woollen, like the ordinary *Egyptians* in their common Conversation; and that the subordinate Priests should be drest in the Temple, but like the common Laity in *Egypt*.

Nor the Cherubim.

4. And so for the Figure of the *Cherubim*, there is as little Ground for the pretended Imitation in this as the other. There is no *constat* in any Records of the *Egyptian Antiquities*, that there was any Thing among them like a Mercy-Seat or Covering over the Ark, adorned with such like Figures. I think there is no Necessity,

* Herod. Lib. 2. c. 37.

+ Id. Lib. 1.

to assert, that this Covering of the Ark was to be absolutely plain, without any Manner of Sculpture. And if the Figure of something must be engraved, why not the Figure of *Cherubim*, at well as any Thing else? Do you think that Imagery was proper only to the *Ægyptians*? Or do you think, that all Nations in the World must be beholden to them to make a Figure of any Thing? Had not they Eyes to behold Postures, and Fancies to delineate them, without going to *Ægypt* for them? Nay, is there not in this Ordinance a particular Opposition to the *Ægyptian Idolatry*? For their Temples were generally filled with the Images of Monkeys and Calves and Serpents, the Representations of real Animals, which according to the natural Deism of those Times, they fancied to be Parts or Exhibitions of the Deity, and had supreme Worship given them. But *Moses* here orders Figures to be made, which had little or no Resemblance of any Thing in the World; and therefore *Josephus* says*, they had a form ἐστὶ τῶν οὐρανοῦ αὐθεῖπνων ἐωγενεῖν τοις πλάνησι, like nothing that is seen by Men. Their Images had divine Worship paid to them, and Temples consecrated to their Honour; but these by the Mosaick Institution were made subservient to the supreme Deity, and constituted Attendants upon his Mercy-seat; as it were in Despight to the *Ægyptian Polytheism*, shewing that these were the Representations only of *Angelick Natures*, who were so far from being Gods, that they were only God's ministring Spirits. What was the particular Figure of these *Cherubim*, at this Distance is hard to imagine. Indeed *Grotius* and others have very ingeniously conjectured from the Creatures seen by *Ezekiel* in his Visions, *Ezek.* i. 5. and 10, 15. which he calls *Cherubim*, that they had the Face of a Man, the Wings of an Eagle, the Mane of a Lion, and the Feet of an Ox. And by this *Grotius* will have the Dispensations of the Divine Providence by the Ministry of Angels symbolically represented; the Lion representing the Severity of his

* Antiq. Lib. 3. Cap. 6.

Justice, the Eagle the Celerity of his Bounty ; the Man his Goodness and Mercy ; and the Ox the Slowness of his Punishment, which comes, (as the Greek Proverb says) *βοσιώ μδι.* with an Ox's Foot. Whether or no the Angelick Appearances in this Form were common to the Patriarchs, I shall not now dispute ; but the Ideas of the Cherubim seems to have been ordinary enough among the Jews, by Moses's not describing them as he does other Things ; and were as well known as the Painting among us of an Angel, in the Figure of a beautiful tall Youth with Wings. Among all the Agyptian Representations I do not find any Thing like this to represent the Angelick Natures ; and therefore 'tis in vain to bring in their other *Simulacra σωλυμογα,* which were Hieroglyphicks of their Osiris, Isis, &c. which they worshiped not as Angelick Natures, depending upon the supreme Deity, but as sempiternal Deities themselves. Neither need we grant, that this Hieroglyphical or Symbolical Imagery was at all owing to the Agyptians, more than to other Nations, that sort of enigmatical Representation, being in Use over all the eastern Countries, and even the Teraphim in Use in the Patriarch's Time, Gen. xxxi. 19. And as for the Image of Sphinx which was frequently pictured upon the Doors of the Agyptian Temples, as Clemens Alex. relates, Strom. L. 5. that cannot be conceived in any Wise to have contributed an Origin to the Cherubim, not only because they were situated in a quite different Place ; but because the Occasion of the Sphinx being painted there, was to be an Hieroglyphick, that a great many of the Ceremonies in their Temples were enigmatical, and had another hidden Meaning more than their outward one did declare.

Nor the Ark. 5. Indeed Dr. Spencer has amassed together an Abundance of Learning to prove, that the Agyptians, and ancient Idolaters made Use of a Cista, an Ark or Chest, in their Superstitions. That the Stoliste *, or those of Osiris's Wardrobe, made Use of a Chest or Ark ; which

* Plut. de Isid.

any Body might guess, without that Doctor's Learning, was to keep their Cloths in. He shews a great Deal of the Use of the *Cista* in the *Orgian* and *Eleusinian Sacra*.

Pars obscura cavis celebrabant Orgia Cistis.

Cætl. Pelei Nupt.

Et levis occultis conscientia Cista sacris.

Tibul. Lib. i. El. 8.

Now what a mighty Wonder is this, that these idolatrous Priests, who pretended to such an Abundance of mysterious and absconded Rites in their Superstitions, should make Use of a Chest to keep their Trinkets in, from the Eyes of the Vulgar. If they had been laid open to every Body's Eyes, all their mysterious Sacredness had been lost ; which was kept up by their lying under Lock and Key. Besides, these Priests of *Cybele* and *Bacchus* were a sort of itinerant Gypsies, that carried about their Trinkets from Place to Place, and therefore they must have a Chest, or something like it, to carry their Raree-show in ; unless you would have them put them in their Pockets. For my Part, I cannot imagine any Analogy between these *Cista* and the *Ark of the Covenant* ; only they were both Repositories, the one for the Law, the other for the Idolaters lewd Fopperies. If the Law was to be laid up carefully, why was not a Chest a very proper and apposite Convenience for this Purpose ? Or why must they needs copy from *Egypt* such a wonderful Contrivance ? Certainly no Nation in the World could be so stupid, as not presently to think of this themselves. But who can think without Horror, that God Almighty should institute his sacred Ark in Imitation of the lewd *Cista* of the Heathen ? Read but *Clemens Alexandrinus's Protrepticon*, and see what those *Cista* were filled with, *Phalli*, the *Pudenda Bacchi*, &c. and let any modest Christian judge, if it can be supposed, that the Purity of the Divine Law could condescend to be the Ape to such horrid Debauchery.

*Feasts of
the New-
Moons not
Egyptian.*

6. The Reason why the *Feasts of the New Moons* were commanded to the Jews, was not I conceive any wise in Imitation of the Gentiles; but to engage them more particularly to Piety, and an Observation of the ancient patriarchal Usage. They were enjoined them as a pious Institution, that some Portion of each Division of Time might be kept holy, to give a Blessing to the rest; for as the Sabbath was set aside to be kept holy in the Week, the Passover, Feast of Tabernacles, &c. for the Year; so was the Feast of the New-Moon ordained to give a Blessing to the Month. Indeed it cannot be denied, but that the Heathens kept holy the New-Moons too, when they offered up considerable Sacrifices to the Gods, as *Meurcius*, and *Monsieur Petit* have sufficiently proved, and Dr. Spencer more at large. And it is plain from that passage of *Demosthenes*, where he says, * that *in the New-Moons all come up to the Acropolis, and supplicate the Gods to give Blessings to the City and themselves.* But then I can never assent, that *Moses* took this from the Heathens. It rather seems to me to be a Practice of the true Worshipers of God through all Ages down from the earliest Times; and so descended both to the Jews and Gentiles from their common Progenitor *Noah*. And it is yet more probable to assign these Feasts an Original in those ancient Times, when perhaps the lunar was the only Year, the solar Motion being not yet sufficiently adjusted; and then the New-Moon must with them have all the Solemnity of a New-Years-Day. Which Opinion will be yet more satisfactory, if we consider the Observation which a learned Man has made, † That God does not bid the Jews *remember to keep Holy the New-Moons*, as he does the *Sabbath*, but only gives them such Rites to observe them with, supposing they knew, that they were to be observed before.

*Nor Wash-
ings.*

7. And as for *Washings and Lustrations*, I cannot assent, that they had by any Means their Original from the Gentiles Lustration, but were probably brought into

* *Orat. I.* in Aristog.

† *Jo. Cler.* in Numb. 28.

Use by the first Sacrificers in the Eastern Countries; and might be as old as *Noah* or *Adam*. For Washing the Hands and the Feet was a Part of the ancient *Cultus*, or Neatness, which was a Preparation which was never omitted, when they enterprised any Thing which required Neatness or Reverence. Thus we find it used always before Meals in *Abraham's* Time, *Gen. xviii. 3, 19, 2.* And without Doubt natural Reason would suggest, that the same Respect was owing to God Almighty, by all who approached his Altar at a Sacrifice; and was as easy and natural a Token of the Reverence they owed to him, as putting off the Shoes and bowing down. And I doubt not, but the sprinkling the People with Water mixed with the Ashes of the Sacrifice, was as ancient: It being used, not only in the Jewish, but in the Roman Sacrifices, *Ovid. Fast. Lib. 4.* For it was thought requisite, that all, who were present, should in some Measure partake of the Sacrifice; therefore as I shewed you before in the beginning of this Discourse, some eat of it there, and others carried Pieces of it Home with them. But in expiatory Sacrifices, for the whole People, where the Sacrifice would not suffice for all to eat of it, it was thought sufficient to mix the Ashes of it with Water, and so to sprinkle them all with it, that so all might receive something of the Expiation.

8. After so many Ages from the first Use of *Temples*, ^{Nor the} it is a very difficult Matter exactly to ascertain the Original of them. 'Tis true, *Herodotus* says, the *Egyptians* first invented them, because the *Greeks* derived most of their Customs from that Nation; and therefore the *Greek* Writers seldom fetch the Original of any Thing any farther. I am apt to think that there was not a general Use of Temples, till such Time as Idolatry spread over the World, and had dedicated the Tombs of Heroes to a superstitious Use. But yet long before this, and as ancient as the *Noachical* Times, there were not wanting *Temples*, or Houses dedicated to a religious Use. For good Men in all Ages have used a religious Worship in Publick, even in *Enos's* Time, when *Men began to*

call upon the Name of the Lord in publick Congregations, after Mankind was considerably increased ; and therefore in great Cities and settled Polities, the Convenience of Temples for appointed Places to meet together in, and to defend from the Injuries of the Weather, could not be long wanting. The ancientest Places of religious Worship I take to be *Groves* ; which were used by the Patriarchs, and were lawful Places of Worship till such Time, as by Reason of the idolatrous Superstition they were applied to, they were taken away by the Mosaical Law. So *Lucian* says; *That Woods and Mountains were first consecrated to the Gods*, Lib. de Sacrif. And *Pliny* speaking of Trees says, *Hac fuere Numinum Templa, priscoque ritu simplicia Rura etiam nunc Deo præcellentem Arborrem dicant.* These were formerly the Temples of the Gods, and those rural Places which maintain the ancient and simple Rites, are wont to dedicate an extraordinary Tree to some God. Thus, Gen. xxi. 23. Abraham planted a Grove in Beersheba, and called there on the Name of the Lord, the everlasting God. And it probably was in a Grove, where Abraham designed to sacrifice *Isaac*, and where the Ram was caught in a Thicket by his Horns, Gen. xxii. 13. And so probably was the Place where *Jacob* slept, Gen. xxviii. 22. which he says, *shall be called the House of God*. Not that from hence it can be concluded, that there were no Temples at that Time, because the Patriarchs did not use them. For they living a pastoral unsettled Life, could not have Convenience to build them, and were therefore contented with the more ancient Custom ; but this very last Text implies, there were at that Time Temples or Houses of God, because *Jacob*, metaphorically, calls that Stone or Place so, which is an undoubted Allusion to the Temples of those Times. And in all Probability *Noah* built a Temple presently after the Flood, for the Convenience of religious Worship. He is in Scripture expressly said, to have built an Altar, Gen. viii. 20. which is directly contradictory to *Herodotus*, who makes the *Egyptians* Inventors of Altars too. And why he might not build a Temple, as well as an Altar,

I see

I see no Reason. Nay, profane History gives a great deal of Encouragement to the Conjecture that he did. For *Lucian* in his Description of the famous Syrian Temple before-mentioned, says, Ὡς μὲν τολλοὶ δευκαλίων τὸν Σεύδεα τὸ ιερὸν, &c. *Most Men say that this Temple was built by Deucalion, namely, that Deucalion in whose Time the Deluge happened.* So that this ancient Tradition makes Temples as old as the Flood, and does confirm, that *Noah* was the first Builder of Temples. And *Janus*, whom learned Men will have to be another Name for *Noah* too, is said by *Macrobius* out of *Zeno*, *Primum in Italiū Templa fecisse, & Ritus instituisse Sacrorum*, Lib. 1. Sat. cap. 9. *He first built Temples in Italy, and instituted sacred Rites.* So that upon the whole, there is vastly more Reason to think, that the Use of a Temple among the Jews came rather down to them by patriarchal Tradition, than that it was copied from the *Ægyptian Idolatry*.

And I doubt not, but that a great many Usages in the Jewish Law came the same Way, and were taken up both by the Heathens and them from their common Progenitors; and sometimes it may be by Chance and ordinary Convenience. And I dare say, a learned Man might as easily prove, that the Jewish Ceremonies were derived from any other Nation, where the like are to be found, as the *Ægyptians*. * *Philostratus* describes the Vestments of the ancient *Indian Priests* just like the Jewish; and says they use Oil in their Consecration. And † *Strabo* says it is a great Crime there (as among the Jews) to offer a maimed Victim; that they have a *Lex Talionis*, and that there is a Law, that no *Indian* should be a Slave. The *Brachmans*, the *Indian Priests*, wear Bells about them like the Jewish High-Priest. Slaves there have their Ears bored through, and a perpetual Light is kept in their Temples; Women and new-born Children are unclean, till they are purified with Lustrations. They punish Incest and Adultery with Death. Only the

Other Nations have Customs like the Jewish.

* Vid. Ap. Lib. 3. Cap. 4.

† Str. Lib. 15.

Brachmans like the *Levites* must go into the inward Parts of the Temple. They are defiled by a dead Body, and have Cakes before their Idols like the shew Bread ; and the *Brachmans* like the Jewish High-Priests must marry Virgins. And the Inhabitants of the Country of * *Tan-gath* redeem their First-born with a Ram. Now when the Jewish and the *Indian* Rites are so very like, why might not I assert, that *Moses* had them from *India*, as well as you from *Ægypt*? Nay, even the barbarous *Tartars* have many Things not unlike the Jews *. They celebrate the New-Moons with Songs and Compotations ; they bewail their Dead thirty Days, they breed no Hogs, and punish Adultery with Death. And so as to the new World, the Children of the People of *Mexico* and *Jucatan* are circumcised ; and the *Mexicans* keep in a perpetual Fire. The *Charibeans* celebrate the New-Moon with the Sound of a Trumpet, and abstain from Swine's Flesh. Those of *Mechoacana* are defiled by dead Bodies ; and those of *Peru*, and new *Spain*, marry their Brother's Wives. And in *Nicaragua*, Women after Child-birth are unclean. Besides, the *Attick* and *Roman* Laws and Rites are in many Things, as like the Jewish as the *Ægyptian*. The *Attick* Laws establish, that no *Ἐπιναύπος* or Heiress should marry out of her own Tribe ; their *τέλεια*, or Cakes answer to the shew Bread ; and the Law of *Solon* ||, that Women in Grief should not tear their Cheeks is not unlike that of *Moses*, Lev. xix. 28. Their Priests were to marry *Virgins* and *Citizens* ; and no Lamb was to be a Sacrifice less than a Year old. And we may say the same of the *Romans*. Their Sacrifices bore a great Correspondence with the Jewish, the burning the *Holocausta*, their *Mola Salsa*, *Lustrations*, &c. Their *Nudipedales* seem very like the Eastern Devotion of pulling off the Shoes. Their *Puer-para*, abstaining forty Days from the Temple, the *Fron-dea Casæ* in the Feasts of *Anna Perenna*, and the *Neptu-*

* Vid. Thevenot. Huet. Dem. Prop. 4. Cap. 6. + Vid. Con-ring. Thes. Rerump. || Plut. Sol.

nalia, so like the Feast of Tabernacles ; the unhallowing of a Priest that touched a dead Body, or who associated with his Wife before Sacrifice ; all look as like the Jewish Laws, as any Custom in *Egypt*. From all which I conclude, that since so many Nations, in so different Parts of the World, have the same Rites with the Jews, either by Chance or Tradition, or it may be by the Mimickry of the Devil ; I am sure it is very great Boldness to say, that all these came to the Jews from the *Egyptians*.

Phil. Well, *Credentius*, you have made a fine learned Harangue upon the Matter, if we Infidels were to be convinced by that. But I have a notable Objection which lies both against *Moses* and all the Sons of the Prophets. And that is, they appear to be like the rest of the Jews, miserable ignorant People, and after all their mighty Pretences to the Knowledge of the divine Nature, are scandalously ignorant concerning it. They every where seem to be gross *Anthropomorphites*, representing God as having Eyes, and Hands, and Feet. *Adam*, to whom God made his first Revelation, knew nothing of God's Omnipresence, or Omniscience, but pretended to hide himself from him, and to make a simple Excuse to him. And *Moses*, who relates the Story, brings in God like a Man walking in the Garden. The same *Moses* was so silly as to fancy God visible, and to desire to see him, *Exod.* xxxiii. And some of the Prophets endow God with human Passions, and make him to repent, to be sorry, and to be glad. But above all the Contrivance of the Prophet *Jonah* is the wisest, who thought to run away to *Tarshish* out of God Almighty's Reach, as if God had no Power out of the Country of *Judea*. Now who can expect Revelation to come from those Heads, which were not furnished with the common Notions of Natural Religion ?

Cred. You do a great Injury to the holy Scriptures, and to the Memory of the holy Men, recorded there, to conceive such an extravagant Opinion of them ; especially when it is taught there, that God is a Spirit, that

Jews far
from being
anthropo-
morphites.

he beholds all Things, is present every where, that he is not a Man, and the like. And therefore you ought in all Candour to suppose, that these Expressions which attribute Hands, Eyes, &c. to God, are only to be taken metaphorically, and are spoke only Ἀνθρωποποιῶς, after the manner as Men speak. And to this the Jewish Writers, who are supposed to understand their own Language best, do unanimously agree. This *Maimonides* spends several Chapters in his first Book of his *More Nevochim* to prove. So the *Targum*, when the Scripture seems to impute any corporeal Action to the Deity, interprets it in a Way more agreeable to the divine Nature. As *Gen. xxviii.* *And behold the Lord stood above it.* *Onkelos Paraphrases, The Glory of the Lord stood afore it.* So *Gen. xxxi. 49. The Lord watch between me and thee.* The *Targum* says, *The Word of the Lord watch between me and thee.* And this is the constant Use of that Interpreter, says *Maimonides More Nev. Lib. I. Cap. 46.* And a Jewish *Rabbin** writes, that when they meet with any Expression or Metaphor, concerning the Deity, of this Nature, they are used to interpose *Cabiacol, If I may so speak,* Vid. *Buxtorf. Lexicon Talm. Rad. בְּבִי.* Now the true Reason why the Scripture does express the Attributes of God by bodily Actions and Properties, is not, that those Writers thought God of a bodily Shape, but by the Reason of the Narrowness of the *Hebrew* Tongue, they wanted abstracted Terms to express them by. And when these corporeal Terms were applied to God, the People of that Nation knew as well what was meant by them, as the Schools do by all their *Quiddities.* Thus the *Eye* of God, is the same as the Providence of God. So *Jer. xxxix. 12. Cast thine Eye upon him, (i. e.) take Care of him.* And *2 Chr. xvi. 9. The Eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the whole Earth,* (i. e.) God takes Care of all People in it. So the *Heart* of God was as well understood by the Jews,

* Author Halic. Ol. c. 1. quoted by Hottinger in his *Dissertat. Theolog. Philolog.*

as if it had in more scholaſtick Language been called his *Decree*, or his *Will*. *David* was a Man after God's own Heart, that is, lived as he would have him, or according to his *Will*, or Laws. By the *Mouth of God* they easily understood his *revealed Will*, by the *Hand of God's Power*. By God his *arising*, his *Vengeance*; by his *hiding himself*, his *Dereliction*, or with-holding his Grace and Providence, *Vid. Maim. More Nev. Lib. 1. Adriani Isagog. Lit. Sac. Ed. per David Hoeschelium.* Nor is there any Reason to blame the sacred Writers for these metaphorical Ways of expressing the Nature of God, because they are best adapted to give the People an understanding of them, and to animate their Affections towards God; whilst dry scholaſtical and abstracted Terms would lie flat upon their Minds, and serve only to amuse and confound them. And after all, the most precise and philosophick Way of speaking concerning the Deity must needs be very improper and altogether metaphorical. For Languages were not composed to speak of the Deity, but for Men to maintain an Intercourse with one another; and therefore unless we would contrive a perfect Set of new Words, we cannot speak at all of God if we should not use our old Terms in a tralatitious Sense. And thus the words *Providenſe* and *Mercy*, &c. if we respect their original Use, and do not take them in a metaphorical Sense, are altogether as absurd, when applied to the Deity, as the Eye, or Hand, or Heart of God, in the grosseſt Sense: For how improper is it, literally speaking, to say, God *looks before* him like Men when they act cautiously, or that God has that earning of Bowels which pitiful Men have over a compassionate Object? And truly if we should perfectly contrive new Words to speak of these transcendent Truths, they are so far above the Reach of our Understandings, and we are acquainted so little with them, that even then there would be a World of Improprieties in our Speech concerning them. Therefore, I think, that we may sit down very well contented with the Jewish Forms of Speech concerning the Nature of God; and that we have

Hebrew Language as well expresses the Nature of God, as the scholaſtical.

rather great Reason to bless his Goodness in ordering it to be explained in such a Way as is intelligible to the meanest People, who would have been but amused and distracted at the abstruse Niceties and Explications which philosophick and scholastick Brains would have made concerning it. This I take to be a very proper Explanation of those human *Parts* and Affections which are in many Places of Scripture attributed to God.

But as concerning some natural Actions which are applied to him, as his walking, coming, going, wrestling, &c. this is to be attributed to the Angel which did represent the Deity in those Appearances. And I doubt not but it was such a vicarious Angel which appeared frequently before the Fall to *Adam* and *Eve* in Paradise. And that it was the *Voice*, or Sound of him *whom they heard walking in the Garden in the Cool of the Day*. That is, they heard that Wind or Voice which used to go before the representing Angel which they were sufficiently acquainted with. For with this Circumstance the divine Appearance used to be attended. As the *Lord answered Job out of the Whirlwind*, Job xxxviii. And *I Kings xix. And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong Wind rent the Mountains*; and after that, an Earthquake, and a Fire, and a still small Voice. Now the guilty Couple understanding by these Preludes, the coming of the vicarious Angel, hid themselves for Fear. Nor did they pretend to make simple Excuses to God Almighty out of Ignorance of his Omnipotence, as you falsely imagine. For they are so far from that, that they unhappy Creatures plainly confess the Fact upon the first Charge, in all the naked Circumstances of it. *The Woman whom thou gavest me, to be with me, gave me of the Tree, and I did eat. The Serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.* There is nothing in these Words which implies any Thing like such absurd Excuses. Only some fanciful Expositors will make *Adam* here to shift off the Crime upon his Wife, which *God had given him*, and to cast a severe Reflexion upon God's Ordinance of Wedlock, which they say he here slyly insinuates to be the

the Cause of his Fall ; and will have *Eve* to lay all her Blame upon the Devil. But the Words import no such Thing, here is only a just Confession of exact Matter of Fact ; and I think there is no Reason they should make their Case worse than it was, and take the Blame of others upon them, when they had sufficient of their own. Neither is it to be supposed, that *Moses* desired to see the divine Essence, but only to have the Glory of the representing Angel more particularly manifested to him, which had hitherto been wrapt up in a Cloud ; that That might be a more evident Token to the murmuring Jews of his Divine Mission. And it pleased God to hearken to this Request, and to let the divine Glory make such Impression upon his Face, as dazled the Eyes of his Beholders. And the Children of *Israel* saw the Face of *Moses*, that the Skin of *Moses's* Face shone, &c. And as for your Instance in *Jonas*, which you triumph so much in, no Body can with any Reason think, that he should be so silly, as to imagine, that That Great God whom he worshiped as the Maker of Heaven and Earth, should have no Power over him out of the Land of *Judea* ; or that he could suppose when he got to *Tarshish*, he should be out of God's Presence. That was the least of *Jonas's* Thoughts ; and the Words of the Text do not imply any Thing like it. It is said, *Jonas* arose up to fly to *Tarshish*, not *Mippene*, from the Face or Presence of God, but *Mealpene*, from before the Face or Presence of God ; *de ad Facies Jehovæ* : That is, he turned his Back upon God at that hazardous and uncomfortable Revelation, and endeavoured by any Ways to get off from the Appearance of God at that Time. He might have thought of any other Place to fly to, where his dejected Fancy led him, as well as *Tarshish* ; but only that Place lying just contrary to *Niniveh*, he contrived to fly thither. He could not think of avoiding God's universal Presence, which he could not but know was every where, but only by flying somewhere he might avoid God's prophetick Presence at that Time, which he had either Hopes he should not be tried

tried with again, or else fondly imagined, as most of the other *Jews* did, that no Revelation could be afforded in a Gentile Country.

Phil. I design to speak but one Word more concerning your Prophets of the Old Testament ; but that shall be a home Thrust at last. They seem to me to be either a Parcel of whimsical crack-brain'd People, that play'd a hundred enthusiastical Pranks to make the Rabble gape at them ; or else were seditious Mutineers that set themselves up, under the Umbrage of God's Authority, to be saucy with their Princes. One of them you may find pushing with a great Pair of Horns upon his Head, another lying 390 Days upon one Side, and a third marrying a Whore in the midst of his prophetick Spirit. You may see *Samuel* carrying himself after that presumptuous Rate to King *Saul*, as if he was a School-Boy. And *Hanani* the Prophet gives King *Asa*, whom the Scripture remarks for a good King, intolerable Language and Provocation, only for making a League with the King of *Syria*. And I think the King did very well for *putting the Seer into the Prison-House* for his Pains. Now are these Men fit to be trusted with Revelation for the Government of the Lives of all Mankind, that are not able to govern their own Actions or Passions with common Decency ?

Cred. Your Prejudices, *Philologus*, transport you too far in censuring the Actions of the holy Prophets, without considering the Customs of those Times, and the extraordinary Messages they were sent about. There are none of their prophetick Speeches which were delivered to the Princes of those Times, but what are made with all due Decency and Regard to their Character ; but yet the Prophets having an immediate Commission from God himself, they ought to have spoken with greater Boldness to them than every ordinary Haranguer, who could only pretend to speak by Way of Persuasion. When they were commanded by God, to reprimand wicked Princes, and to denounce Judgments against them, they had betrayed their Trust if they had not spoken the Truth with

Bold-

Boldness ; and had incurred the Penalty of those who feared God less than Man. And as for some unusual Actions which they did, as *Micaiah's making him Horns of Iron*, that was the usual Way of those Times to prophesy by *Signs* ; for under such *Hieroglyphical Representations*, most of the Morality and Divinity of the Eastern Nations was couched. Neither were all those *Signs* which are related in the prophetick Writings really acted, but some of them only in Vision ; and this, in all Probability, was the Case of *Hosea*, when he *took the Wife of Whoredoms*, and of *Jeremy* when he is said to have lain so many Days on one Side. As for your Instances in the Prophets *Samuel* and *Hanani* ; *Samuel* had the Administration of the Jewish Theocracy immediately under God, before *Saul*, and was a Prince when he was but a Peasant, had singled him out and anointed him King, and besides had the Command of God to rebuke that headstrong King ; this will bear him out in all his Severity of Expressions he used towards him. And as for *Hanani*, he did very justly reprove King *Asa*, for his relying on the King of *Affyria*, and not on the Lord his God. 'Tis not his bare making a League with the King of *Affyria*, which he is reproved for, but for his putting more Confidence in this than in God's Providence. Besides, to compass this he had used very indirect Means ; for he purchased that King's Favour, by sacrilegiously taking the Treasures of the House of the Lord, 2 Chron. xvi. 7. to make a Present to him. And though the Scripture does affirm of this King *Asa*, *That his Heart was perfect all his Days*, yet this is to be understood only of his Zeal against Idolatry ; yet several grievous Faults he was guilty of, as particularly the Imprisoning this holy Prophet, and his *Oppressing the People at the same Time*, v. 10. and even in his last Disease it is recorded, that *he sought not to the Lord, but to the Physicians*, v. 12.

Phil. We are arrived now at last to a Leisure to talk more particularly of a Mediatorship, and a Satisfaction to be made for Sins. Now your whole Religion is bottomed upon the Supposition of that which is all false and erroneous,

neous, and inconsistent with the Nature and Goodness of God. For this supposes God a rough implacable Being, that is easy to be offended, and hard to be pleased ; when, on the contrary, nothing is so good and kind, and willing to be reconciled to his Creatures. Indeed the Wickedness of Men, who have been apt to think every one as bad as themselves, has inclined them to have such hard Thoughts of God Almighty, and made many of them think, for many Ages ago, the Deity to be a severe Sort of Being, and the subtle Priests found it for their Advantage to encourage the Notion ; and hence the Practice of Sacrificing got into the World. For when Men found they had done something which was displeasing to God Almighty, they thought to make him amends another Way, and so would sacrifice a good fat Bullock or Ram, at his Altar. This was the first silly Logick in early and barbarous Ages, and the Priests for their Profit have been improving it ever since ; till at last they have vamped it up into that Mediatorship and Satisfaction which the Christian Religion is grounded upon. But in the first and purer Ages of the World, these idle Worships were unknown, when they worshiped God with Prayers only, and Praise, and never thought of appeasing the Deity with these foolish Briberies, which must be so far from being grateful to him, that they must needs be his Aversion.

Tis ὡδὲ μῶρος καὶ λίαν αὐτεμένος,
Εὔποστος ἀνδρῶν ὅστις ἐλπίζει Θεὸς
Οσῶν αὐτάρκεων καὶ χρήστης πυρωμένος;
Α καὶ κωτοίς πενθῶσιν ἔχει βρέστημα,
Χαιρεῖς ἀπαντας, καὶ γέρες λαχεῖν τόδε;

*What Man is such a silly Wight,
To think that Gods should e'er delight
In nasty Bits of broiled Meat,
Which hungry Dogs would hardly eat ;
And to be pleas'd in such a Sort
As to grant Men their Blessings for't ?*

And

And this the Scripture-Writers themselves are forced to own, although they were bred up under Sacrifices. *In Burnt-offerings and Sacrifices for Sin thou hast no Pleasure.* Psal. xl. 7. *To what Purpose is the Multitude of your Sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord, I am full of the Fat of the Burnt-offerings of Rams, and the Fat of fed Beasts, and I delight not in the Blood of Bullocks, or of Lambs, or of He-goats;* and the Conclusion from all which the Prophet makes is, that they should lay aside this expiatory Trumpery, and take up with good honest Deism and natural Religion : *Put away the Evil of your Doings from before mine Eyes, cease to do Evil, learn to do Well, seek Judgment, relieve the Oppressed, judge the Fatherless, plead for the Widow,* Isa. i. 12, &c. So that you see this Sacrifice and expiatory Satisfaction is all butcherly Stuff, which is neither acceptable to God, nor agreeable to the Sentiments of wise Men.

Cred. You run away a little too fast with your Argument, when you make such Exclamations about the Severity and Implacableness of the Deity, where it is asserted, that he requires Expiation and Satisfaction for Men's Sins. Wicked Men, that are resolved to live on in a Course of Sin, may flatter themselves, that God has nothing in him but Mercy ; but I am afraid in Time they will find, That God in his Laws has regard to his Justice too. I will not assert, That it is impossible that God as God, all whose Attributes are infinite, should forgive the Sins of Men without a Satisfaction to his Justice : But yet I say, that considering God as a Legislator, who designs to govern Men by his Laws, it is not agreeable to his Wisdom to suffer his Laws to be trampled upon with Impunity by bold and regardless Sinners. And indeed all God Almighty's Attributes are directed by his infinite Reason and Wisdom, and his Mercy is not, as a great many take it to be, a Sort of feminine Tenderness that cannot hold out against the Cries of suffering Offenders : But such a good and wise Relaxation of the Punishment which his Justice in Rigor might demand, as may secure the honour of his Laws, his eternal Justice and Purity, and withhold make

Expiation
consistent
with the
Mercy of
God.

make all possible Allowances for the Infirmities of Mankind. And upon this Reason I take the Nature of expiatory Sacrifices in all Ages to have been grounded; to shew the great Aversion God has always had to Sin, and to deter Men from Sin, by shewing the great Satisfaction which he required for it. And therefore I do not approve the Reason which a late Author * gives, that the End of Sacrifices was to make *Sin costly to the Offender*, and *to appease the Consciences of penitent Sinners*, by shewing that God accepted the Death of the Beast in lieu of theirs. For these are only general Ends, but the most principal and particular End which was aimed at in the Sacrifices of Beasts was, that they might be Types and Fore-runners of the great Sacrifice of our blessed Lord, from the Efficacy of whose infinite Satisfaction they received all their expiatory Nature. For as the Apostle argues, *Heb. x. 6. It is not possible that the Blood of Bulls and Goats should take away Sins*; and therefore these must all have Reference to the infinite Satisfaction of Christ, which alone can. So that these bestial Sacrifices both before and under the Law, were to the Sacrifice of Christ as the Tabernacle to the Temple. God Almighty was pleased to accept them as expiatory till such Time as that great Sacrifice was finished. But as when the Temple was built, the Tabernacle was destroy'd: So after the Suffering of Christ, these ritual Sacrifices were at an End. Nay, we have rather great Reason to adore the infinite Mercy of God; than to tax him with Severity, for accepting of such vicarious Sufferings; for he might in Justice have demanded the personal Suffering of the Offender himself, his Life for every Transgression, which would soon have put an End to the Race of sinful Mankind. To have forgiven all without any Satisfaction, would have been, in Effect, to have given an uncontrollable License to Sin; and to have punished to the utmost Rigor, would have left no Room for Men to adore his Mercy: But by this admis-

* Discourse concerning natural and revealed Religion, p. 100.

rable Mixture of Justice and Compassion, his own Honour is preserved, and Men's Sins are pardoned.

Neither can I assent to your Opinion, that Sacrifices are the pure Invention of Men; for it is highly probable that they were at first instituted by God Almighty, and Directions for the Performance of these sacrificial Rites given to the First of Mankind, and so have been handed down to the several Branches of their Posterity ever since. Indeed *Grotius* and some others are of Opinion, that Sacrifices owe their Original to the Gratitude of Mankind, who in Thanks to God were willing to return back to God some Part of the good Things they did enjoy; and that before the Flood there was no Sacrifice offer'd of Animal Creatures. But granting, that Gratitude gave Origin to Eucharistical Sacrifices, we are as much at a Loss to find a Reason for the Piacular, unless we allow they came by the Institution of God. Neither is his Reason convincing, by which he would prove that no Beast was sacrificed till after the Deluge; viz. because Sacrifices are never but of such Things whereof Men used to eat: Now there being no Flesh eat before the Deluge, that Indulgence being afterwards granted to *Noah*, he concludes, that no Flesh was sacrificed. But this Argument is but weak. For it is very much to be doubted whether the Antediluvians did not eat Flesh; and *Bochartus* contends strongly that the Grant to *Noah*, Gen. ix. was not larger than what was afforded to *Adam*, Gen. i. And besides, in piacular Sacrifices in many Nations, they never stood upon the Edibility of the Sacrifice; but oftentimes sacrificed Horses or Men. Besides, it is probable that these expiatory Sacrifices of Blood commenced from the first Fall of Mankind, to be the *αιτιυχα*, or vicarious Punishments for the Lives of *Adam's* Off-spring then forfeited. And then there is some Reason for their Institution at that Time; but there is none that I know, for their being set up in the Time of *Noah*. And when the Scripture says expresly that *Abel* offered of the *Firblings of his Flock*, and the *Fat thereof*; methinks it is a jejune Interpretation, to say he Offered only *Lanam & lac pinguisimum*,

guissimum, Wooll and very fat Milk (*i.e.*) Cream. I am therefore persuaded, and I think upon good Ground; that a Model of sacrificial Rites, or at least a Command in general of piacular Sacrifices was given to our first Parents, and by them transmitted down to all their Posterity. For otherways it is impossible to give a satisfactory Account why we should meet with the same in all Ages, in all Countries from the *East* to the *West-Indies*, from *Africa* to *Scythia*, and there find Men practising the same piacular Rites almost in an uniform Manner. If their Sacrifices were owing to the Gratitude or Reasoning of the different Inhabitants, they would be as widely different as their Customs and Manners are; but when we find so many different People that have no Intercourse with one another, doing exactly the same Things as if it were by Confederacy, killing the Sacrifice, burning the Flesh, and that too upon an Altar, by the Ministry of a Priest, and with an Opinion that their Sins are discharged by that vicarious Punishment of the devoted Animal, with many other like Circumstances; this must needs prove, that they could not all jump upon these Things by Chance, but had them delivered down to them by some ancient Predecessor, who was Progenitor to them all.

And as I proved to you before by this Argument*, that the *Americans* did proceed from the *Europeans*; so I think it is as plain that they did all proceed from *Adam*, from whom the general System of sacrificial Rites has been propagated to them after the Succession of so many Ages. And here we may fix our Foot, and settle the Commencement of all moral and ritual Religion, and whatsoever we find of them both, though ever so vitiated in the different Parts of the World, esteeming them to be but corrupted Streams of the ancient Revelation afforded to our first Father: And as for those Texts of Scripture which you alledge, they do by no Means undervalue or cast any Reflection upon God's ritual Laws and Sacrifices. But the Design of them is to shew, that

* Conf. Part I. p. 154.

Men should not place their Obedience only in the ritual Parts of Religion, whilst they neglect the more substantial Duties of Morality; and this is a Truth which every honest Christian, as well as you Deists, thinks himself bound to believe.

Phil. I confess, what you say does not altogether want some Probability. But still methinks these vicarious Punishments seem but insignificant Trifles in Matters of Religion, because they do not make Men the better or the more innocent. Indeed if these Expiations either in themselves, or as they had Relation to the Death of Christ, did perfectly take away Sins, then there is something in what you said: but they only leave the Man as they found him, unless true Repentance did make him better: So that the Mediatorship without Repentance signifies nothing at all; and Repentance where they know nothing of this Mediatorship, must, by all charitable Men, be allowed to be valid; and therefore what Need of the Mediatorship or Satisfaction at all? Repentance after sinning is all that Man can do, or God can require. 'Tis true, the Debt we owe to God Almighty by sinning is infinite, and what then; * *If I owe a Million, and can pay but a thousand Pounds, my Creditor can have but all.* 'Tis true, *my Body is then subject to Imprisonment, that is to the farther Extent of the Law; but then that Law is void of Mercy.* So that when I have done my All, that is, repented; what Need is there of Expiation, when God's Mercy will acquit me, as having paid what I was able?

Cred. It is true, that God's Mercy is that blessed At-
tribute to which the Pardon of all our Sins is owing, and
upon which the Mediatorship is founded. This is that
which gave Life to the Stipulation between Christ and the
Father, that He should die for the Sins of the whole
World, in which all-sufficient Sacrifice all other Expiati-
ons received their Force and Energy. And it's likewise
true, that after Sin committed, Repentance and Amend-
ment is all we can do on our Parts. But then farther, we

God's Honour to be considered in the Mediatorship.

* *Oracles of Reason, p. 207.*

Christians, say that the Mediatorship must do something likewise on God's Part as well as ours. By Sin God's Honour is violated, and our Lives are forfeited; now both these are to be remedied by the Efficacy of the Mediator. Indeed Mercy for God to Pardon, and Repentance for us to amend, is all that is necessary for our Security. But then on the other Side, why must there be no Satisfaction given for the injured Honour of God? God may be as merciful to the World as he pleases, but still he must be just to his own Dignity; for otherways he would devest himself of the Government of the World, and leave impudent Sinners to sin without Controll. And therefore we say, that therein lies the admirable Wisdom of the Mediatorship, that both Parties are thereby satisfied; God has the Security of his Honour, and Man of his Salvation.

Phil. But, *Credentius*, this Satisfaction, as you call it, in the Mediatorship, is a Business which lies so cross in my Brains, and is pregnant with such a Number of Absurdities, that I can never away with it. And therefore you see, that not only we, but your Brother Christians the *Socinians*, are so aware of the Grossness of this Doctrine, that they are unanimously agreed upon it, to explode it; as giving Men such a barbarous Notion of the Deity, as is inconsistent with the Excellency of his Nature. For Satisfaction does suppose an angry revengeful Temper, which desires to be glutted with the Punishment of the offending Party; which when that is brought about, becomes tame, good-natur'd, and reconcileable. But this is such a pitiful Imbecillity, even in human Nature, as wise Men are ashamed of; and therefore to attribute this to the infinite Purity and Wisdom of God, is no less, I think, than the most daring Blasphemy. But supposing there was such an angry vindictive Nature in the Deity; yet methinks even then he should rather choose to take Revenge upon every one for their own Demerits, which would be agreeable to Justice; and not make one innocent Person, *viz.* Jesus Christ, who had no Sin, as you suppose, to suffer for the Sins of all other wicked Men; and to lay the deserved Sufferings of so many outrageous

rageous Offenders upon the Back of the most pious and spotless Man, that, by your Account, ever came into the World. But when we farther consider, that this innocent Person is owned by you to be the Son of God, and his only Son too, and must nevertheless be sacrificed to appease this vindictive Nature of God, before he could be reconciled to the World: This is such a horrid Representation of the best of Beings, as shocks human Nature to consider; and far out-does all the Stories of *Scythian Sacrifices*, and *Busiris's Altars*. And yet greater Monsters of Absurdities do appear, when we consider, That this suffering Person was the supreme God himself, who by this Scheme is supposed to have took upon him all the Infirmities of an human Body, was hungry and thirsty, and at last was crucified, and died. Now this does imply a sort of a Possibility in the Deity, which of all Heterodoxies is the most gross and absurd.

Cred. I have not Time now to enter with you into the nice Disputes of the *Socinian* Controversy upon this Subject. But however, I do not see any Thing in the general Notion of Christ's Satisfaction, which does reflect at all upon the Goodness of the divine Nature. Indeed the word *Satisfaction* is not found in Scripture, but the whole Substance of what the Word imports, is; and this and all other Words which are used to express any of the divine Actions, or Nature, must be used Metaphorically, and not be taken in so strict a Sense, as when they are used properly, and according to their original Application. Now the Satisfaction which is here meant, is not such a Satisfaction as an angry Man requires, but a *judicial* or *forensical* Satisfaction, which a Governour requires of an Offender, upon the Violation of his Laws. Now whereas the whole Oeconomy of our Salvation is delivered in Scripture in forensical Terms, as when God is represented as a Judge, Man as an Offender or Criminal, God's Word as the Law by which he is condemned, Death as the Punishment, Christ as a Mediator and Surety, his Death as an *avilavlegv*, or Price of Redemption; now I think it not at all improper to call that which Christ did

*What is
meant by
Satisfac-
tion.*

to free us from the Obligation we were under to the divine Justice, upon Account of our Sins, by the Name of Satisfaction. For this is no bloody revengeful Satisfaction, which impotent and passionate Minds are wont to call for; but only such a just Debt as ought to be paid to the Justice of God, considered as the Governour of the World. I am not insensible, that some *Calvinistical* Writers have carried this Matter a little too far, by leaving no Room at all for the Mercy of God to exert it self in this wonderful Dispensation, and making the divine Justice to require a Satisfaction to be made, by the same specifick infinite Punishments which we had deserved, in the Sufferings of our Saviour; so as to think that no Satisfaction could be, unless Christ actually suffered upon the Cross all the eternal Torments of the damned *intensive*, as they speak, though not *extensive*; so that our Saviour in his Agony and Crucifixion, must suffer Torments as much infinitely greater than damned Souls, as their Eternity of Suffering is longer than the Hours of our Saviour's Passion. But this has no Foundation in Scripture, and seems horrid to Christian Ears. It is enough to say, That the Mercy of God disposed him to accept of the temporal Sufferings of Christ for our Sins in Lieu of the eternal Punishments, which we had deserved. And so the infinite Dignity of the Person suffering was a sufficient Satisfaction to the divine Justice offended; and unspeakable Mercy was shewn to offending Mankind, by being freed from that Punishment which otherways they must have undergone themselves. So that Infidel and *Socinian* Scoffers do very ill to arraign the Mercy of God, and to tax him with Revenge and Implacability in demanding such a legal Satisfaction; for by the same Rules they might expose all the Legislative Authority in the World when Criminals suffer by their Sanctions. For there is no other Way to maintain the Legislator's Honour, and to engage Men to observe his Laws, but by inflicting an exemplary Punishment on Offenders: For otherways their Laws would be but Cobwebs, and their Authority the May-game of licentious Transgressors. But in this

vicarious

vicarious Punishment of Christ for us, God is far from shewing himself an angry or implacable Governour ; but does rather manifest the greatest Tenderness and Compassion in being willing that all the World should escape their deserved Punishment, and Christ only suffer for them all ; and in accepting the temporal Pains of his Cross for those of eternal Death, which they had deserved.

2. Neither is it unjust that Christ should undergo a *A vicarious Punishment not unjust* vicarious Punishment for us. For that vicarious Punishments are not in themselves absolutely unjust, may be proved not only from * Scripture-Instances, where Children are punished for their Parents, and Subjects for their Princes ; but by the Notion which the most civilised Nations have always had of the Lawfulness of punishing Sureties for the Parties they were engaged for, by their denying the publick Honours to the Children of notorious Offenders, by Decimations in their Armies, and by killing the innocent Hostages when the Articles were not performed. Now if the *Greeks* and *Romans*, who of all other Nations pretend to the exactest Rules of the *aequum bonumque*, could see no Obliquity in these vicarious Punishments ; there is certainly a far less Pretence of Injustice to be laid to God's Charge in ordering Christ to suffer for the Sins of the World. Now it is impossible here that there should be any Injustice, or Injury. Here was no Injustice done to Christ ; for he was pleased voluntarily to lay down his Life for us. Neither was it any Injustice done to God ; for God authorised him to do it, by a mutual Stipulation betwixt the Father and the Son. And our Saviour says expressly, *Joh. x. 18. I have Power or Authority, ἐξουσίαν, to lay down my Life.* So that there is no more Injustice committed in our Saviour's laying down his Life in a voluntary Suffering for us ; than there is in his laying it down according to *Socinus*'s Notion, for a Testimony of his Doctrine. And I am sure I could prove it as equally unjust, for God to put him upon

* Gen. ix. 25. 2 Sam. xxi. 8. 2 Sam. xxiv. 15. Job. vii. 14.
1 Kings xxi. 29.

preaching a Doctrine that would cost him his Life, as to let him lay down his Life to save a World.

*Christ, tho'
God, might
suffer.*

3. And as for your tragical Exclamations against the orthodox Doctrine which makes the eternal Son of God, who is himself God blessed for ever, to be incarnate, and to suffer for the Sins of the World ; this does by no Means render the Deity passible, a Notion which all Christians abhor. But by reason of the Union of the Deity with Flesh or Humanity, which was passible, Christ was then in a Possibility of Suffering ; and those Sufferings which were proper only to one Nature, are attributed to the whole Person by Reason of the intimate Union of the two Natures. Nay, the Scripture it self attributes the Properties of the inferior Nature, *viz.* the Humanity, to the Divinity the superior one. As when it is said, that *we are redeemed by the Blood of God* ; we must not think as if God could bleed or die, but that That Person who was both God and Man, who by Virtue of his Humanity, was capable of Suffering, laid down his Life for us, to redeem us. Now here is nothing in this of Absurdity, but only adorable Mystery, and admirable Wisdom, which the Thoughts of Man could never have reached to, and no human Counsel could ever have contrived : To find out such a Way to save the Souls of lost Mankind, and to secure God's Honour, and the Authority of his Laws.

Phil. I have one Thing more to object to you upon this Head, and that is the Christian Doctrine which you teach about Christ's Intercession ; and that is so odd and gross a Notion, as no rational Man can assent to. For you make Christ continually at his Prayers in Heaven to God the Father, to pardon the Sins of Mankind upon their Repentance, and to bestow his Benefits upon them ; which God in his own Nature is inclined to do, without this Bustle of Intercession. Besides, it looks like a Piece of Pageantry (as your Doctors explain it) to have Christ continually exhibiting the Wounds of his crucified Body to the Father, to move him to Compassion, and to put him in Mind of the Sacrifice he was made for Man's Sins, which it is impossible that an omnipotent Knowledge could

could be unmindful of. Methinks this looks like a Piece of *Homerick* Divinity, when the Poet describes Heaven according to all the Formalities and Sillinesses which are seen in human Nature.

Cred. There is nothing in the Christian Doctrine of *No Inconsistency in Intercession* but what is agreeable to good Sense and Reason: And all Expressions which do seem to imply any *Grossness* in them, as you imagine, must only be understood figuratively. To what State of Bliss the glorified Body of our blessed Saviour is exalted, whilst we poor Christians live in this Vale of Misery and Tears, we are not able to imagine; or with what divine Actions his Humanity is employ'd. All that we can be certain of is what the Scripture tells us, that *we have an Advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous*, 1 John ii. 1. that he is said to *intercede for us at the right Hand of God*, Rom. viii. 34. that *he is entered into Heaven it self, now to appear in the Presence of God for us*, Heb. ix. 24. that *he is a Priest continually*, and his Blood *speaks better Things than that of Abel*, that *he offers his own Sacrifice for Sin for ever*, Heb. ix. 25. and the like. Now there is no Need to assert, that all these Expressions are taken literally, when it is plain that many of them are Metaphors taken from the *Levitical* Law, from the piacular Sacrifices, from the Intercession of the High-Priest for the People, from his entring into the *Sanctum Sanctorum*, &c. Now St. Paul makes Use of these ritual Phrases, the better to explain to the Jewish Converts the Nature and Efficacy of Christ's Death, from those outward Ceremonies of the *Mosaical* Law, which they were well acquainted with. And I doubt not but the Unbelievers themselves do think these Expressions are metaphorical; but only they have a Mind to be picking up something to be flinging at Religion, though they are at the same Time sure it will do no Harm.

Phil. Pardon me, Sir, for this, and I will not at present trouble you with any more Infidel-Objections; and for the rest of the Time that you will honour me with your Company, I will endeavour to entertain you with more inoffensive Discourse. Though I cannot but ac-

knowledge that I wish I was fully persuaded of the Truth of your Religion ; which seems indeed, upon farther Consideration, to be a rational Institution, and well laid together, which lays down the Laws of Morality more exactly and fully, than the ordinary Reason of Mankind ; which gives an Account of the grand Periods and Revolutions of the World, and God's providential Dispensations, beyond common Philosophy, and the Light of Nature ; and if I could get rid of some other Doubts, which I beg you will at your Leisure satisfy, then I hope you will make a thorough Convert of me.



A CON-



A

CONFERENCE WITH A THEIST.

PART III.

CREDENTIUS. PHILOGOGUS.



T was now the declining Time of the Year, and the *Summer* was well nigh spent ; when in a Morning which was as curious and delightsome, as poetical Fancies are wont to describe it, *Philologus* had a Mind betimes to take the Air, as well to receive the pleasant Refreshments of so fine a Day, as to enjoy the Satisfaction of a solitary Walk, which would the better entertain his studious

studious Thoughts. From the back Part of his House he had a Row of Trees, which led down directly to the River's Side, along which, for the Space of almost a Mile, Nature had thrown up a curious green Bank, somewhat resembling an artificial Terrace; which adapting it self to the natural Winding of the River, did afford at the same Time a very agreeable Prospect, and a delicious Walk. *Philologus* had no sooner come to the River's Side, but he espies at a Distance, upon the same Bank, *Credentius*, with a Book in his Hand, walking softly and reading. *Philologus* with more than ordinary Haste makes up towards him, whom when he came pretty near, he accosts in this manner.

Phil. O my dear *Catechist*, good Morrow to you. I find your Divinity is up before our Humanity. I am afraid these ill-natured Fathers, *Credentius*, will not let you either eat or sleep.

Cred. Good Morrow to you, kind Sir. I find both Morning and Evening you are in a pleasant Vein, and that you can make merry with your Friends as soon almost as you are up. I assure you, Sir, my Study seldom spoils my Stomach, or hinders my Repose; and this Book I have in my Hand, is none of those formidable Fathers you are so scared at. It is a Book wrote by a foreign Divine, a very ingenious and learned Man; it is *Monsieur Le Clerc's Causes of Incredulity*; wherein he has handsomely shewn, that the Christian Religion is no Ways to blame, as not affording sufficient Reasons of its Credibility; but that the Gentlemen of your Way are in the Fault, who carry such Vices or Prejudices within your selves, as do estrange you from that admirable Religion, which otherways you could have no Exception against. I will not trouble you with a particular Abstract of that excellent Book; I shall only recommend it to your diligent Perusal, which I doubt not, will afford you considerable Advantage, and will save us both some Words in the Progress of our Conference, if you think fit that we shall proceed therein. And if you will be so kind as to accept it, the Book is at your Service.

Phil.

Phil. I thank you, Sir, for your Present, and for your Sake I will give it a careful Reading. But in the mean Time I must beg a little more of *Credentius's* Tutorage, if he has any Thoughts of making a Christian of me ; but truly, I think, I have got such weighty Arguments to urge against your Religion, that if you would but lay aside your Prejudice and Bigotry, I should not despair of making you an Infidel. Hitherto we have had only some little Skirmishes with you, and have made only Attacks upon the Out-works of Christianity, but now you must expect that we shall assault the very Heart and Vitals of it. Though the World should not be eternal, nor *Moses's* History of the Creation and Fall ridiculous ; though natural Religion should be a less perfect Rule of Morals, and Prophecy not Enthusiasm, nor Christ's Satisfaction and Intercession subject to seeming Absurdities ; yet if there be Reason to suspect the Grounds of Christianity, and if I can make out, that the Proofs which it pretends to, are weak and shallow, that the Sincerity of the first Propagators of it is to be questioned, that the Body of its Doctrines is contrary to Reason and common Sense, and those Books which are said to be of divine Inspiration, cannot be thought to be wrote by Men of good Understanding ; I say, if I can make out all this, I hope I may have the Liberty to be an Unbeliever still ; but if you have the Luck to convince me, *Credentius*, *I will assure you*, your Religion shall be mine. And indeed it will be my great Honour to subscribe to his Opinion, which in every Thing else, besides Religion, I would blindly follow.

Cred. I pray God give that Issue to our Endeavours ; not that I am fond of the Honour of a Victory over so great an Adversary as *Philologus*, but that you may be delivered from the Danger of these ill Opinions, and that the Example of your Conversion may draw in (as I doubt not but it will) a Swarm of other little retailing Unbelievers, who do pin their Infidelity upon your Sleeve.



Of the Authority of Scripture:

AND FIRST,

Of the Predictions of CHRIST.

Phil. **B**UT to spend no more Time in Preamble, that we may make an End of our Dispute this Day, I will tell you in what Method I design to range the Objections, which I shall confront your Religion with. I now come in Order to speak to the Authority of the Scriptures; and all that I shall say upon this Subject, I shall reduce to these two general Heads: Speaking first of the subject Matter contained in these two Books: And secondly, Of the Books themselves, their Stile, reputed Authors, and the like. Nor shall I go about, to take to Task all the Books of the Old Testament, under the first Head, but confine my self only to some Particulars of the New; As *the ancient pretended Predictions of the Messias, the History of the Lives of Christ and his Apostles, the supposed Miracles done by them, and the Doctrines they preached.* I shall begin with the Predictions of the *Messias*.

Now these, which many of you Christians take to be strong Proofs of your Religion, I look upon to be the greatest Weaknesses in Christianity. For there are many Places of the Old Testament, which you quote for Prophesies of Christ, which bear no more Relation to him, than if you capped as many Verses out of *Homer* or *Virgil*. You make a mighty Stir with God's threatening the Serpent, in the third of *Genesis*; and yet that does not seem to me to be more a Prophecy of the *Messias*, than the Story of *Cadmus*; the plain Sense of it seems only to be, that when the Serpent was doomed to creep on the Ground, Men should tread upon it; which is all can reasonably

reasonably be meant, by bruising its Head ; it was only the false Glosses of fanciful Commentators, that would understand the *Messias's* triumphing over the Devil by his Cross, from this Passage. That mighty Prophecy of *Balaam*, concerning the *Star's coming out of Jacob*, and the *Scepter's rising out of Israel*, Numb. xxiv. 17. relates not at all to Christ, but to the People of the *Jews* *, whom the Seer, for some Reasons best known to himself, had a Well-wishing to, and said that, notwithstanding *Balak's* Opposition, they were like to be a very flourishing People. And as for the *Scepter's not departing from Judah till Shilo come*, 'tis hard to make that a Prediction of Christ, till we are able to understand what is understood by that obscure Word ; and besides, 'tis plain that there never was a Scepter in the Tribe of *Judah* since *Zedekiah* ; so that, if this be a Prophesy of Christ, you must make him to have come at the Time of the Jewish Captivity, which is a little too soon for your Purpose.

But as for the Prophesies quoted in the New Testament, they are ten Times less to the Purpose than the other ; for they all relate to such different Matters from what they are brought to speak for, that it shocks the strongest Christian Faith to consider ; and shews, that the Allegers of those Passages are so far from being inspired Authors, that they do not seem to understand the common Sense of Words. St. *Matthew*, who seems to have the most unlucky Hand at these Quotations, has two or three of these Passages all together at the beginning of his Gospel. He quotes the 14th of *Isaiah*, for a Prophesy of Christ's being born of a Virgin †, and yet there is nothing of the Matter to be found there. For the word *Gnalamah*, in that Place, signifies only a young Woman ; and so it is used in other places, as *Proverbs* xxx. 18, 19. where the wise Man reckons, among the Things not to be discovered, or which leave no Footsteps behind, *The*

* Jul. in Cyril. Ed. Span. 262. † Celsus in Orig. Lib. 1. Julian in Cyr. Lib. 8.

Way of an Eagle in the Air, &c. and *the Way of a Maid with a Maid.* Now such a Kind of Maid as this is, does not make much for your Purpose. Besides, if there be any Truth in this Prophesy, it must relate to some young Woman of that Time, probably the Prophet's Wife, who shortly was to have a Child, before which Child should be of Years of Discretion, the *Jews* should be delivered from their Oppressors. And then there is some Sense in this Sign. But to make *Ahaz* have a *Sign* given him to be accomplished at the Birth of Christ, so many hundred Years after his Death, is a Jest, and which a Man must not only have a great deal of Faith, but a good Stock of Fancy, to make out. And so just after, when he quotes that Text of *Jeremy*, Jer. xxxi. 15. Matt. ii. 17. where *Rachel*, the Mother of the *Benjamites*, who dwelt in *Ramah*, is described weeping for her Children the Inhabitants, which were destroyed by God's Judgments; he applies it, without any Discretion, to *Herod's* Murther of the young Children. So the Words of *Hosea*, *Out of Egypt have I called my Son*, he makes a Prophesy of Christ's Stay in *Egypt*, during *Herod's* Persecution, Matt. ii. 15. when 'tis plain to any one, that they are to be understood of the *Jews* Deliverance out of their Bondage there, if you read but the whole Verse whence this is taken. *When Israel was a Child, then I loved him, and called my Son out of Egypt*, Hos. xi. 1. And so Passages out of the 2d, 72d and 22d Psalm, are brought to as little Purpose. For the two first of these are composed upon *Solomon*, and the Title of the 72d does expressly say so. And as for the 22d, that is only a pathetical Description of *David's* Sufferings. And as for most other Places which are alleged on this Behalf, I think with *Celsus*, they are ἀγνῶστα, παροιεῖα καὶ παντὶ ἀδηλα, &c. Unintelligible, enthusiastical, and perfectly obscure Sayings, which no wise Man can understand a Tittle of, but only afford Occasion to Fools and Jugglers to apply to their Purposes. What do you say to all this, *Credentius*?

Cred. Say to you ! you have crowded together so much Blasphemy and Infidelity, I can hardly tell where to begin with you. But to bring you to a better Opinion of the Predictions of our Saviour, I would have you consider with your self,

1. Whether or no several of these Passages which you refer to, and others in the New Testament, that are quoted out of the Old, be not brought in by Way of Allusion or Accommodation, rather than Prophecy ? Now unless you were sure that all those Places of the New Testament, which you are wont irreligiously to expose, cannot possibly be understood this Way, you do a very great Act of Injustice to these Writers. For why should not St. *Matthew*, or St. *Paul*, quote a Passage of *Isaiah*, or the *Psalms*, and apply it to another Sense, as well as you or I make the like Use of a Verse of *Virgil* or *Ovid*? Suppose I should bespeak the Apostles, those first famous Propagators of our Christian Faith, in the Words of *Virgil's* Invocation of the Sun and Moon, *Virg. i Georg.*

Texts quoted by Way of Accommodation.

*Vos O clarissima Mundi
Lumina, &c.*

You would not look upon this to be any great Solecism. Now why has not St. *Paul* the Liberty to do the like, when he quotes a Passage of the 19th *Psalms*, which is understood of the Sun and the Moon, and applies it to the Preaching of the Apostles ? *But I say, have they not heard ? Yes, verily, their Sound went into all the Earth, and their Words unto the Ends of the World,* Rom. xv. 18. So our Saviour makes Use of *Isaiah's* Words, which he spake of the *Jews* of old, to describe the *Jews* of his Time ; *This People honoureth me with their Lips, but their Heart is far from me,* Matt. xv. Isa. xxix. 14. There is hardly any Body will deny, but that these Texts may fairly be accounted for, by Way of Accommodation. And I see no good Reason, but several of the Texts, which you have mentioned, may be explained the same

Way.

Way. Suppose, I say, when St. Matthew quotes that Text of *Hosea*, in his Relation of Christ's coming back from *Egypt*, he had only a Mind to use the Prophet's Words, *Out of Egypt have I called my Son*, rather than in plain Words to say, *And thus God's Son came back out of Egypt*: You will not be able to make good the contrary against me. Nay, in what fitter Words could the tragical Effects, of *Herod's* barbarous Murther of the Infants, be expressed in, than in those of the Prophet which St. Matthew chose? *In Ramah there was a Voice heard, Lamentation and Weeping, and great Mourning, Rachel weeping for her Children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.* Yes, you will say, these Passages cannot be quoted by Way of Allusion, because they are brought in with this Clause, *That the Scripture might be fulfilled*, which shews they are meant for Prophesies. But I cannot think, that the Jews always, when they used this Phrase in quoting a Text of Scripture, thought that Text was a Prophesy of what it was applied to. I only take it to be an Instance of the religious Way of speaking, which the Jews above all Nations used. For, as they were wont to attribute the common Actions of Life to God's doing, and to entitle Things great and remarkable to God, reflecting thereby an Honour upon God himself; so, I suppose, they designed a Respect to the Scripture, by seeming to attribute a Propheticalness, to every Part of it which they quoted. Not that they thought every Passage, so alleged, to be truly prophetical of what they accommodated it to; but only they made Use of this honourable Expression, to shew their great Regard to God's Word. I doubt not but this Phrase, *That the Scripture might be fulfilled*, and the like, were used first in quoting real Prophesies; but that this (as all other honourable Expressions) by long Use sunk in its Value, and was more vulgarly applied; so that, at last, it was given to Scripture only accommodated. There are an hundred Instances of this Nature to be given, in all Languages; I shall instance but in one, out of the Bible, which is very nigh of kin to this we are speaking

speaking of ; and That is the Signification of the Word *Prophet*. In its first and ordinary Signification, we all know, that it signified an inspired Messenger of God, and yet in Process of Time it came to denote Poets, *Tit.* ii. 12. and Singers of *Psalms*, *1 Sam.* x. 10. *1 Cor.* xiv. 1. Now if *Prophecy* could at last come to signify only *Singing*, why might not the Phrase *Fulfilling of Scripture*, or *Prophecy*, signify only *Quotation* ?

2. It is to be observed, That many of these Places quoted out of the Old Testament in the New, are to be supposed to be understood in a mystical or allegorical Sense ; and therefore it is not fair to say they are falsely alleged, or not to the Purpose, because the literal Sense of the Original doth not import so much. Nothing was more common, among the *Jews*, than to explain Scripture in such a Sense ; and therefore the Writers of the New Testament, who conversed chiefly among the *Jews*, are not to be blamed, if they made use of their own Way of Interpretation, in their Disputes with them ; which must be, at least, good Argumentation *ad Hominem*, and be more convincing to them than Proofs, which we might account more solid. For most Men are very fond of their own Way of Reasoning ; and this the Apostles understood very well, and therefore, when they speak to the *Greeks*, they address themselves to them in their own Way, and sometimes quote their Authors, as St. *Paul* does *Aratus*, and *Epimenides* : But when they speak to the *Jews*, as for Instance, in the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, they argue, in the Jewish Way, from the Types and Prefigurations of the Law and Prophets. It cannot be denied, but that it was the Opinion of the ancient *Jews*, that the inspired Writings of the Old Testament, had a great deal more hidden Sense couch'd in them, than what did at first Sight appear ; and this Doctrine I take to be as old as the *Psalmist's* Time. *I have seen an End of all Perfection, but thy Commandment is exceeding broad*, *Psal.* cxix. 96. That is, the Scripture is so full of Sense, has so much of Prophecy, typical Prefiguration, and the like, (besides the literal Meaning, which is obvious to every one) that there is

no coming to an End of it. And it is plain likewise, that this was the received Doctrine about our Saviour's Time, by that Saying of St. Paul in the tenth Chapter of the first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, where speaking of several Actions in the *History of the Old Testament*, of the *Israelites* passing thro' the Sea, drinking out of the Rock, &c. the Apostle subjoins, *Which things happened πυκῶς, by way of Type, and were written for our Instruction, εἰς τὸ τέλον τὸν κατώρθωντα.* *τίνοις, on whom has lighted the Completion of the former Ages:* Not as we translate it, *On whom the Ends of the World are come.* Where you may observe, that the *οἱ πύκη*, the Prefigurations of the former Ages are opposed to the *τὰ τέλη*, or the Completions of the *Apostolick Age*. So again, *Gal. iv. 4.* he calls that Age *πλήρωμα τῆς χειρός*, the Fulfilling of Time, or the clear making out those typical Passages of the former Ages. And *Ephes. i. 10.* he calls the Time of the Gospel *οἰκονομίαν τῆς πληρώματος τὸν κατέχοντα*, *The Dispensation of Completion, or Fulfilling of Times;* where all Things *ἀναφερασθεῖσαται*, are gathered into one in Christ, *both which are in Heaven, and which are in Earth:* That is, in him is made a Recapitulation of all the Types of the *Old Testament*; all the ancient Law, and remarkable Actions of former Times, do as it were center in Him; and his Life and Passion is a Kind of *Anacephaleosis* of them all. And so St. *Chrysostom* explains the Place, *εἰς πύκη τὰ ὅπῃ μακεῖν λεγούσας*, &c. That the Life of Christ is a compendious Relation, of what is said, at Length, in their Types in the *Old Testament*. And so St. *Jerom* (who wonders, that the Old Latin Translation should render *ἀναφερασθεῖσαται renovare*, when it is a Metaphor taken from an Orator's Recapitulation, or winding up his whole Discourse) says, *Omnis Dispensatio tam visibilium quam invisibilium creaturarum adventum Dei filii pollicebatur, &c.* The Dispensation of all Things visible and invisible, did foretell the Coming of the Son of God; the driving of Man out of Paradise did foreshew his being re-called by Christ; the Division of Tongues did prefigure the Apostle's Gift of Tongues; and Isaac in a Type did carry the Cross of Christ. Nor is it the Opinion and Practice only of the Writers of the *New Testa-*

Testament, but also of the ancient and modern Jews; the only Fault is, these latter generally carry on the Matter too far in their *Midrash's* and *Cabbala's*; they often run all Matters of Fact into such strange Allegories, and find such wonderful Mysteries in Letters and Syllables, as makes a meer Jest of God's Word. But the soberest of them do just as the Writers of the *New Testament* do; they allow an original literal Sense of some remarkable Passage, and leave a typical One to prefigure something in the Time of the *Messias*. Thus the *Targum* allows the *seventy-second Psalm* to be spoken principally of *Solomon*, but says, that typically, or by way of prophetick Excursion, it is to be understood of the *Messias*. And the like is asserted by *Solomon Jarchi*, a learned Jewish Rabbin. And, this Way, several of the Passages quoted in the *New Testament*, some of which you have alleged, may be fairly accounted for. As for Instance, That, which the *Infidels* make the most terrible Work with of all, *And behold a Virgin shall conceive, &c.* It is true, That Place in *Isaiah*, from whence this is taken, is not spoken solely of Christ, neither does the Apostle say it is, but only that the Prophet's Relation of That History did more eminently agree to Christ's Birth; and that the Virgin there mentioned, and the Child called *Immanuel*, were *Types*, or *Prophetick Descriptions* of Christ, and his immaculate Conception. Nay, unless we will allow in some Measure this typical Prefiguration of our Saviour, and his Dispensation, there is no Sense to be made of an hundred Rites commanded in the old Law; for *Moses* was a Man of good Sense, though you should own him only as a secular Legislator, and cannot be supposed, to have commanded so many strange Rites, to so little Purpose, as any other Account allots them. But, if we allow them to be enjoined, principally by the Inspiration of God, though instrumentally by the Mouth of *Moses*, (as we Christians do) and to be primarily designed for the good Government, and religious Worship of the Jews, but secondarily, for Types of our Saviour; there is a great Deal of good Reason to be shewn, why some very strange Ceremonies should be used, as par-

ticularly the *Passover*, which is so clear an Emblem of Christ's Passion, all the Ceremonies of which ancient Sacrament answer exactly to the Circumstances of his Death. And I question, whether some particular Passages in the Bible, the History of which is so short, would ever have been related, or at least in their full Circumstances, if they had not been designed to prefigure Things of a higher Nature.

Phil. I find if I do not stop you, to cool a little in your Heat, you will talk so much of Types and Prophecies, that you will be running, by and by, into an Enthusiastical Comment upon *Daniel* or the *Revelations*. But by the Way, *Credentius*, if we should once allow this typical or allegorical Way of explaining *Scripture*, one might prove the History of *Guy of Warwick* out of the first Chapter of *Genesis*. Nay, the most Enthusiastical Phanatics would be the best Expositors; for they are for a World of mystical Expositions, and have pretended to find Prophesies of Old *Noll* and *Muggleton*, almost in every Book of the Bible. Nay, the principal *Fathers* of the *Church* have perfectly balderdash'd the *Scripture*, by these Types and Allegories; by making whatever they have a Mind to, out of any Part of *Scripture*, and giving us rather a fine Exercise of their Fancy, than a true Explication of the Text. And, indeed, some of your soberer Interpreters shew so little a Liking to this Way, that they do not look upon those *Texts of Scripture*, which are quoted * as Prophesies in the *New Testament*, to be any solid Proof of the *Christian Religion*; and *Grotius* himself owns, that the Apostles did not prove that Christ was the *Messias* by these prophetick Testimonies, but rather appealed to his Miracles; allowing these only to be brought in for Ornament sake, and as Arguments which were of no Force to convince *Infidels* †, but were only fitted a little to strengthen those, who were good Christians already.

* Socin. Lect. Sacr. Smalc. De Div. Christ. Cap. 9.

† Grot. in Mat. Cap. 1.

Cred. It is not my Busines to apologise for all the Excesses, which some have been guilty of, in explaining Scripture in the allegorical Way, as knowing there have been several Abuses committed in this Kind ; I am only to defend the Writers of the *New Testament*, all whose Arguments of this Kind are very sober and natural ; and, they having the Spirit of God to assist them in their Compositions, and to *guide them into all Truth*, there is no Doubt to be made, but that the Types they refer to, were certainly by God designed as such. Nay, farther, I see not, but why the same Kind of Arguing may be used, by modern Divines ; if they take Care not to be too fanciful this Way, but keep themselves within the Bounds of Moderation and good Reason. And an * ancient Father lays down a very good Rule in this Case, *Never X̄s de x̄, n̄ ab iſoējāv, &c.* Let us wisely understand those things in Scripture, which are spoke according to the History, and so let us receive those Propheſies, which are made out according to the † Theory. But let us not make Theory of that, which ought historically to be understood, nor force that into an historical Sense, which ought to be Theorized ; but let us adapt a proper and convenient Sense to both. But if the Propheſy be ſuch, that it may be properly interpreted according to the History, and yet the Theory of it be not forced, then may both of them be uſed. And truly, there does not want good Reason to think, there is more couched under some Expressions and Passages of Scripture, than upon firſt Sight, and in the primary Intention does appear. Because the Scriptures are a divine Composition, written by the Directions of an All-knowing Mind, which can foresee a thouſand Accidents and future Contingencies, besides the principal Matters, which the indited Words have Relation to. Indeed we Men, by reaſon of the Scantiness of our Knowledge, are forced to adapt our Words ſolely to the Thing, which we are at preſent thinking of ; because our Thoughts will

* Ifidor. Peluf. Ep. ciii.

† The Ancients called the Allegorical Way of expounding Scriptures θεωρία, Theory.

not extend to more than one Thing at the same Time ; and because all future Accidents are beyond the Ken of our Understanding. But what Reason is there, that we should tie God Almighty to this Rule, and make our Imbecillity the Measure of his boundless Knowledge ? *His Thoughts are not like our Thoughts, nor his Ways like our Ways.* 'Tis true, all other Books, besides the Scriptures, being the Productions of human Understandings, are only to be interpreted according to the most obvious Sense of the Words ; because it is to be supposed, that the limited Thoughts of the Writer had no farther a Reach. But when the great God of Heaven and Earth is pleased, for the Good of his Creatures, Himself to indite Writings, which are to be the standing Directions to Mankind, for all future Generations ; there is no Doubt to be made, but almost every Word of that divine Composition takes its Place there, by the Direction of an infinite Wisdom ; and that He, by his Fore-knowledge, has an Eye to the Circumstances of future Ages, whilst He is directing Himself seemingly only to those, in whose Time the Books were wrote. Such an heavenly Composure must needs bear many Impresses of the boundless Thoughts of its Almighty Author ; and cannot easily be thought, to be limited to the narrow Particulars they were first designed for. One might instance in many Texts of Scripture, where 'tis obvious, that the Holy Ghost has industriously worded an Expression so, as that it might be a Direction, either for the Faith, or Morality of future Ages ; and yet seemingly, it may be, to the inspired Writers themselves, nothing like it was intended. I shall content my Self with one Particular. Our blessed Saviour is recorded by the Evangelist, *Mat. xxvi. 27.* in the Delivery of the Cup in the blessed Sacrament, to say to the Communicians, *Drink ye all of this.* Now I doubt not, but that the Holy Ghost, besides the bare Relation of the History of this Sacrament, which was all that the Church for several Hundreds of Years, and perhaps the Evangelist himself understood by it ; I say, besides this, I doubt not, but that the Holy Ghost did design particularly, to set up

an everlasting Monument of the Truth, and to fix an eternal Brand upon the impious Sacrilege of the *Romish Church*. For when the Evangelist omits the Word *All*, in the Relation of the Delivery of the Bread, and mentions it, as it should seem, so emphatically in that of the Cup ; it is plain, that something more is designed, than a bare historical Relation. And this I take to be the Case of many of the Types, and Predictions, of the *Old Testament*. They were not so exactly discoverable, before the Coming of Christ ; because Men were not acquainted with the Life, and Actions, of That blessed Person, which did so exactly correspond with those remarkable Passages of the *Old Testament*, that did prefigure them : But, afterwards, they could not but own them to be designed for Marks of Him, when they compared our blessed Saviour, and the Types and Prophesies together. For then, there appeared such a wonderful Analogy, between the Oeconomy of the Old and New Law ; that the Ceremonies and Expiations, commanded by *Moses*, were known to be but Shadows of the Doctrine and Satisfaction of Christ ; and that the Lives and remarkable Actions of several famous Persons, before the Birth of our Saviour, were but laid out, by Order of God's Providence, for rough Draughts of the great Design of Christ's Mediatorship. There are a Multitude of Instances, of this Kind, to be produced out of the five Books of *Moses*, and other Books of the *Old Testament*, which will convince any one, that will be at the Pains, to observe them himself, by a careful Reading, or out of Christian Expositors, and other Writers ; nay, they may be discovered even from the Jewish Rabbins themselves, who make many of those Passages Types of the *Messias*, as we do. And now after all, what Absurdity is there, that a Book wrote by *divine Inspiration*, as we suppose the *Old Testament* to be, should have a wise Regard to the *Actions* and *Occurrences* of future Times ; and have another *Accomplishment* of its *History* or *Predictions*, different from what was primarily design'd ? Have not you and I oftentimes several *Reasons* and *Motives* for doing one and the same Thing ? And

therefore, Why may not God Almighty indite one *History*, or *Prophesy*, which may serve *Two* several Ends, or which may have *Two* several Completions? The carrying on of two such Designs, can in no wise be denied to the *divine Wisdom*; which, we see, does in some Measure lie, within the Compass of *human Sagacity*. And 'tis but reasonable to think, that such a great and unparallel'd Instance of the *divine Providence*, as the sending of the *Messias* to save the Souls of Mankind, the like of which never was, nor ever will be known again; I say, 'tis but reasonable, That this amazing Dispensation should not stand singly by it self, and fall upon Mankind without any previous Preparation; but that Men should be disposed thereunto, by some great *Prophecies* and *Prefigurations*; and that many of the other lesser Lines of God's *Providencē*, should be pointing at, and drawing to this mighty Center. And besides, this is yet more reasonable, when the *infallible Spirit* of God in the *New Testament*, does it self direct to these Types, and does point out to us, what former Occurrences were *Prefigurations* of the *Messias*, and his Dispensation. But, however, we ought not (as some do) to make use of this typical Way of explaining *Scripture*, to the destroying the Letter, and when, it is plain, the Words are literally Prophetick; when only the Prophet has gone off, on a sudden, from his first, to a more sublime and diviner Subject. And now, having premised thus much, I will give a short Answer to the prophetick Texts of *Scripture*, just now quoted.

Phil. And I wish you good Luck in your *Expositions* of them; I am sure, they make the Generality of your Commentators, to sweat under the *Difficulties*, and serve only to make us *Infidels* Sport, with their clashing with one another.

Cred. Why then, by your Leave, I will begin with *Gen. iii.15.* that of the third of *Genesis*, ver. 15. *I will put Enmity between thee and the Woman, and between thy Seed and her Seed: It shall bruise thy Head, and thou shalt bruise his Heel.* I say, this is a very direct and clear *Prophesy* of our blessed Saviour. For God Almighty, who spake these

these Words, directs them to the Devil, an envious and malicious Spirit, who had embodied himself in, and made Use of the corporeal Organs of a certain *Animal*, which Moses here calls a *Serpent*; and therefore he so expresses himself, that the Words may agree both to the *Devil* and the *Serpent* too, who by this *Possession* had acquired a sort of *personal Union* with one another; so that what was said to one might be understood of either of them. The Sense of the whole *Malediction*, in which this Prophecy is contained, (as it is laid down in the present, the foregoing and following Verses,) seems in short to be this. “ Because there are four *Delinquents*, who have had an Hand in this great Depravation of *human Nature*, and the vitiating this noble Work of human Kind; therefore you shall all of you share your allotted Punishments. As for the Serpent, whose Body was made Use of for this wicked Design, I judge his Body, for a Monument of this unhappy Miscarriage, to be changed from his original Figure; from that erect Gate, that beautiful and shining Form, that nimble and volatile Motion which he has hitherto enjoyed, into the hated Shape of one of the ordinary creeping serpentine Kind. As for the Man, who was overcome by the Allurements of his Wife, the *Earth* shall be cursed for his Sake, and he shall be forced with Labour and Toil to earn the Necessaries of Life, since he would so perversely violate the Law of God, and unnaturally ruin his whole Posterity, for such a foolish Gratification of his Appetite. The Woman, for her Guilt, shall undergo the Pains and Difficulty of Travail. But the Devil, who was the principal Author of this Mischief, shall have his Head bruised by the Seed which shall be born of the Woman. Though thou, O *Satan*, mayst bruise the Heel of the Woman, and of her Off-spring, by disturbing them with Temptations, and making them obnoxious to temporal Calamities; yet Christ, that *Holy Seed*, which shall be born of her, shall bruise thy Head, he shall perfectly destroy thy Power, and ruin thy Kingdom;

“ the

" the bruising of her Heel shall not be a mortal Wound,
 " but shall be healed by the Merits of the *Messias*; but
 " the Wound in thy Head (like that of the Serpent
 " which thou dost possess) shall be incurable; for
 " Christ not taking upon him the Nature of Angels,
 " *Heb.* ii. 16. shall leave *thee and thy Seed*, thy self,
 " and the other fallen Spirits, for ever irremediable".
 Indeed some *modern Criticks* and *Commentators*, will have
 these Words to be understood only of the corporeal Ser-
 pent; but this without sufficient Ground. For if these
 Words were only directed to the corporeal viperous Ser-
 pent, what a jejune Meaning, nay, what an unjust De-
 termination must this *divine Menace* carry with it? Here
 is a Curse on the Serpent to go always upon his Belly,
 when according to this Supposition he never went other-
 ways. And besides, here is the Man, the Woman, and
 the Serpent, cursed to some Purpose, who had but the
 lesser Share in the Guilt; and the crafty Devil, who
 was the wicked Contriver and Carrier on of all this Mis-
 chiefe, must upon this Supposition escape Scot-free. For
 unless under the Name of the Serpent the Devil be under-
 stood, he can have no Share in the awarded Punishment.
 Now the great Occasion, which has made Interpreters so
 much disagree upon this Place, (some attributing the Curse
 wholly to the Devil, and others wholly to the Serpent,) has
 been the Want of the due Considering the *personal Union*, which was then betwixt the Devil and the Ser-
 pent; so that the Word *Thou*, spoke to both of them in
 Conjunction, might agree to either; or, when it was di-
 rected to the outward Appearance of the Serpent, might
 be understood of the Devil, who was actuating those
 Organs. So that, when the Curse says, *Upon thy Belly
 shalt thou go*; that is to be understood of the outward
 Serpent, or the Body which the Devil did then posseſſ.
 When it says, *I will put Enmity between thee and the Ser-
 pent, &c.* that may have a double Meaning, and may
 be understood both of the outward Serpent and of the
 Devil; of the Antipathy of Mankind to viperous Ani-
 mals, and the Malice of the Devil to us, or the War be-
 tween

tween the Flesh and the Spirit. But when it says, *The Woman's Seed shall bruise thy Head*; this can be understood only of the Devil, who was to have his Share of the Punishment inflicted upon him, this Way. For certainly, nothing could be more grievous to that malicious Spirit, than to have his Plot thus defeated by this gracious Promise of the *Messias*; to see the Hopes of fallen Mankind thus on a sudden raised, and his own for ever sunk. Indeed, it may be allowed, that the Phrase *bruising of the Head* is a Metaphor drawn from the usual Way of killing a Serpent, which is wounding the Head; and the *bruising the Heel* may be likewise taken from the Usage of venomous Reptiles to bite the Heel or Foot; but this can never be the full Sense of the Words, unless we can suppose, that the Devil had no Hand in this sad Disaster, or that *Moses* tells this Story only of a common Serpent, that once upon a Time did talk. Which would be such a silly Piece of legendary Stuff, as the excellent Writings of that wise Author do demonstrate he could never be guilty of. Nor is it any Objection against what I say, that one Part of this Execration relates to the corporeal Serpent, and the other to the Devil; because, at that Time, when the Devil possessed the serpentine Organs, they were, as it were, personally united, and for a Time one. So that it was very proper to say, *Thou shalt go upon thy Belly*, meaning the Serpent, *Thou shalt have thy Kingdom destroyed*, meaning the Devil, though the word *Thou* were directed only to the outward visible Serpent: This, I say, is altogether as proper, as when any one shall say to the same individual me, *Thou walkest, thou thinkest*, though these be the Acts of two distinct Beings, though naturally united, the one of my Body, the other of my Mind, which are as much Two in their original Natures, as the Devil and the Serpent.

Phil. But when there is nothing of the Devil here mentioned, nor of his Empire being destroyed; why should you Christians fly to such a hard metaphorical Sense, which no Body could have found out but those who

who go a Fishing for Arguments, and which most certainly would never have been dreamt of, but that some prying Christian or other, was willing to pick up something about Christ, in the beginning of his Bible.

Cred. But indeed, Sir, you have mightily mistaken the Matter, for none of all this is any Christian Invention ; and if you remember, in a former Discourse, *Conf. Theist, Part I.* I made appear to you, that the ancient Jews, under the *Old Testament*, owned that the Devil was the Occasion of Man's Fall. And now I will shew, that the ancient Jews likewise understood the Words we are now speaking of to be a Prophecy of the *Messias*. *Onkelos*, the old *Chaldee Paraphraſt*, explains the Words thus: *I will put Enmity between thee, O Serpent, and the Woman, and between thy Son, and her Son; he shall retaliate as much Evil to thee, as thou haſt done to her.* And the *Targum of Jonathan*, another old Jewish Paraphraſt speaks thus. *I will put Enmity between thee, and the Woman, and between the Seed of thy Children, and her Children. And it shall come to pass, when the Children of the Woman shall keep the Precepts of the Law, then they shall be watchful to wound thee in the Head: And when they shall forsake the Precepts of the Law, then thou shalt be watchful to strike them in the Heel.* But they shall have a Remedy, and thou shalt have no Remedy. *And it shall come to pass, that they shall make to themselves a Plaifer for their Heel, in the Days of Messias the King.* And the *Targum of Jerusalem* not much unlike; *And it shall be when the Sons of the Woman shall meditate upon the Law, and shall do the Precepts, they shall be intent to strike thee upon the Head, and shall kill thee. And when the Sons of the Woman shall desert the Precepts of the Law, and not do its Commands, then thou shalt be intent to hurt them in their Heels, and shalt make them sick.* But there shall be a Remedy to the Sons of the Woman; but to thee, O Serpent, there shall be no Remedy, forasmuch as Time shall come, when one of them shall make a Plaifer for the other in the Heel, in the end of Extremity of Days, in the Days of King *Messias*. These are such evident and home Proofs of a most ancient Tradition

dition, and received Opinion of the *Messias* being promised in these Words, that if the suspicious Jews had not had the keeping of these Books, all along, 'tis an hundred to one but that the Devil had been dealing with some Critick or other, to have branded these Passages with a *Pia Frons* in their Fore-head, for the Service of the Infidels. Now if we consider this ancient Interpretation of this Passage of Scripture, in the Jewish Church, and the Reason of the Thing it self; how rational it is, that the Devil should have his Share of Punishment allotted him in the Malediction; and how agreeable it is to the Goodness of God to reach out this Mercy, and to declare this comfortable Promise to them upon their unhappy Fall, who from this and other Promises, all along the Patriarchal Times, had a constant Expectation of a *Messias* to come, to repair this fatal Miscarriage; I say, to a Man that considers all this, there cannot be any other Interpretation of this Place, which can be equally satisfactory. I do not say that this Prophesy, as it is recorded in *Moses*, is one of the clearest of those which are found in Scripture, or that I would have particularly chosen this to convert an Infidel; for I know there are others, which are less liable to Cavils: But I think I have proved, that this is liable to no just Exceptions; and, I am sure, I have said more for it, than the Infidels, or Criticks either, can possibly say against it. This Interpretation has been allowed by the Church in all Ages; and among our Moderns, the most Judicious and Pious, both of *Lutherans*, *Calvinists*, and *Papists*, as well as those of our own Church, do explain the Place this Way. Nay, if we may believe the Relations of two very learned and sober Men, the Devil has owned this Charge against himself, and has been terrified with the bare repeating of this Prophesy. *Johannes Brentius*, in the *Preface* to the fifth Tome of his Father's Works, about the End of it, has this remarkable Relation. The *Preface* is directed to the Senate of the City of *Hall* in *Swedeland*. When Christopher Haafs was *Gouverneur* of this famous Republick, who was my God-father, and a Gentleman,

tleman, whom I cannot but mention with Honour, and one of extraordinary Prudence and Piety: When this Gentleman lay upon his Death-Bed, a few Days before his Death, there enter'd into the Room a certain Person, whom he took to be a Scrivener, with Pen, Ink, and Paper, who sitting down at the Table, thus spoke to the sick Man: Christopher, (says he,) give an Account of all the Sins of your Life, for I am sent by God to take an Account of them, and to bring them before his Tribunal, where you shall answer for whatever you have done. The sick Man lifting up himself, as well as he could, in his Bed, and now understanding that he had to do with a wicked Spirit, answered with a courageous Mind, Let a Title be wrote to the Instrument first, which shall be this, Semen mulieris conteret caput Serpentis, The Seed of the Woman shall bruise the Serpent's Head. Under this Title I will put all my Sins, both of Commission and Omission. And the Devil, upon hearing this Answer, vanished. A like Story is related by *Johannes Wolphius*, in his famous Book *Lectiones Mirabiles*, Tom. 2. p. 396. of an old Man of *Friburg*, who, upon his Death-Bed, drove away the Devil by the same Text of Scripture. I do not mention this to you, *Philologus*, as if I thought I should be able to convince a Man of your Character, of the Truth of this Relation; but only to shew the general Opinion of *Christians*, and *Jews*, concerning this Text of Scripture, being to be understood, as a Prophecy of Christ. Though thus much I would have you observe, by the Way, that these are no *Popish* legendary Stories, but are related by two very sober and learned *Protestants*.

Scepter of
Judah,
Gen. xl ix.
10. Pro-
phesy of
Christ.

Your next Objection is against the Prophecy of *Jacob*, Gen. xl ix. 10. *The Scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a Law-giver from between his Feet, till Shilo come, and to him shall the gathering of the Nations be, or, he shall be the Expectation of the Nations.* Now, I think, this is a very clear Prophecy of our blessed Saviour, and is a manifest Proof of his being the true *Messias*. That the ancient *Jews* understood this Passage of the *Messias*, is evident from the old *Paraphraſts*, and other ancient Rab-

bins ; so that you must not say, this is a fancied Interpretation of the Christians only. *Onkelos* explains it thus : *The Author of Royal Power shall not pass away from the House of Judah, nor the Scribe from the Children of his Children, till the Messias comes, whose is the Kingdom.* *Jonathan* paraphrases thus : *There shall not cease Kings, and Governours, from the House of Judah, and Scribes teaching the Law from his Seed, even to the Time when King Messias shall come.* And the *Targum of Jerusalem*, after this Manner : *Kings shall not fail from the House of Judah, nor Scribes, Doctors of the Law, from the Sons of the Sons of Judah, until the Time that Messias the King shall come, whose is the Kingdom, and to whom all Kings of the Earth shall be subjected.* The like Explication is given by the Author of the ancient Book, called, *Bereishith Rabba*, by *Kimchi*, *Moses Hadarshan*, and other ancient *Jews*. And the Reason why some modern ones have attributed this famous Passage to *Saul*, or *Solomon*, or *Nebuchadnezzar*, is only the Malice they bear to our Saviour and our Religion, which they are grieved to see defended by so clear a Testimony. Now, I say, this does appear to be a clear Testimony of Jesus Christ's being the *Messias*, if we consider the plain Sense of the Words, which is ; that about the Time of the coming of the *Messias*, the Scepter shall depart from *Judah*. The greatest Difficulty is, to know what is most naturally to be understood by *Scepter*, and what by *Judah*. Now by *Scepter* must be understood one of these two Things, either Government by a King, or any other Monarch, whose Authority the Scepter is the Emblem of ; or else Government in general, so as to take in all the particular Ways of Polity, a Nation may be ruled by. And by *Judah*, must be understood either the Tribe of that Name, or else the whole Nation of the *Jews*, who were so called, from that most eminent Tribe. To understand by *Scepter*, that there should be always, till the *Messias* should come, a standing Monarchy among the *Jews*, and particularly of the Tribe of *Judah*, cannot be allowed ; for there was no *Scepter* among the *Jews* in this

this Sense, till *Saul* was King, and he was not of the Tribe of *Judah* neither ; neither was there any King of that Tribe after *Zedekiah* ; nor after the Captivity, had they any King at all, unless those of the Family of *Herod*, who were of a foreign Extraction, and were *Jews* only by *Proselytism*. Neither can it be said that any Kind of Government was constantly entailed upon the Tribe of *Judah*, distinct from the other Tribes ; for during *Moses's* Time, the Government of the *Jews* was in the Family of *Levi* ; during the Time of the *Judges*, it was among diverse of the Tribes ; in the beginning of the Monarchy, it was in *Saul*, or the Tribe of *Benjamin* ; and after the Captivity among the *Levites* of the *Asmonean* Race. So that it can by no Means be said, that the *Israelitish* Government did always continue in the Tribe of *Judah*.

It remains therefore, that by *Scepter* is understood a *settled Polity* ; and by *Judah* is understood the People of the *Jews*, who derived their Name from that Tribe, which ever since the *Babylonian* Captivity has made the greatest Body of that People ; for the *Ten Tribes* being lost in that long Exile, the Tribe of *Judah* only, with the ascititious one of *Benjamin*, did compose this People, as we now see them, and as they have been for above these two thousand Years. Therefore the Sense of the Prophesy must be this : That, till the Time of the *Messias*, there shall be always a *settled Polity*, or Government among the *Jews* ; there shall be a *Scepter* and *Law-giver*, among them ; they shall be a distinct Nation of themselves ; and shall be governed by their own Laws ; but, after that Time, this Promise shall cease, then they shall have no more a *Scepter* or *Law-giver*, then they shall be no longer a settled People ; but shall be dispersed throughout all the Corners of the Earth, and live under the rigid Laws of other Nations, where-ever they chance to come. Now the Prophesy, in this Sense, was most manifestly compleated, about the Time of our Saviour Christ's Coming. For all along before, since the *Jews* were grown up, from a Family to a People, they were governed

governed by Laws and Rulers of their own ; not only, during the Time of their *Judges* and *Kings*, which was their more flourishing Estate, but even after their Captivity, for a Time, by the *Asmonean* Race, who were of the ancient *Levitical* Blood ; and afterwards by the *Herodian* Family, who, though they were only *Jews* by Religion, yet they maintained their *Laws* and *Discipline* as well, as if they had been originally so. But about the Coming of Christ, that is, a few Years after his Ascension, the *Scepter* of the *Jews* was perfectly taken away, and they have had no National Government ever since : *Jerusalem*, the Metropolis of their Nation, was about that Time utterly destroyed, and rased to the Ground ; and such a Dispersion of that People made all about the World, as no History can parallel. For, though the *Romans* conquered *Spain*, and *Gaul*, and *Britain*, &c. yet they never so chased these Nations out of their Country, as they did the *Jews* ; but suffered them to incorporate with their own Colonies ; so that those Countries seemed to be the same People still, though their Government was something altered by the Introduction of *Roman* Laws. But, ever since *Titus*'s Devastation of that City and Country, there has been no Face of a Common-wealth among the *Jews*, either in *Judah*, or in any other place ; and therefore, I say, this total Dissolution of the *Jewish* Common-wealth, is the *departing of the Scepter*, which is mentioned in this Prophecy. Now when we consider, that all the ancient *Jews* took this Passage as a Prophecy of the *Messias*, and that a Scepter should be among the *Jews* till the Time of the *Messias*, when there should be an End of it ; we may reasonably conclude, that our Saviour was that *Messias*. Because at that Time no Body, besides our Saviour, had any Colour or Pretence to be the *Messias* ; and because that great and fatal Period of the *Jewish* Scepter, or Government happened just after his Appearance : Therefore, I say, it must be concluded, that the *departing of the Scepter* was the wonderful Dissolution of that Government or Polity : And that our Saviour (about the Time of whose Appearance up-

on Earth this came to pass) is the *Shilo*, or the *Messias* that is here predicted.

Phil. But by the Way, Sir, this is a little too much forced, to go down with us. How comes the Tribe of *Judah*, or the Seed of that one Patriarch, to signify the whole Nation of the *Jews*, of which this was but a *Twelfth Part*?

The whole
Nation of
the Jews
properly
understood
by Judah.

Cred. Why, during all the Time of the *Jewish* Establishment, the Tribe of *Judah* was the most eminent; and had a Precedency of the rest, not only by Reason of their Wealth and Number, but upon Account of their Primogeniture. After they had Kings, the Monarchy was entailed upon that Tribe: And after the Captivity, that was the only Tribe in a Manner remaining, and all the *Israelites* that are now known to be in the World, and that have been ever since the Captivity of *Babylon*, are denominated *Jews* from that Tribe. For if there are any of the other Tribes among them, as to be sure there are many of the Tribe of *Benjamin*, and perhaps of some of the rest, they are all engrafted upon the Stock of the Tribe of *Judah*, and therefore do very properly bear its Name. As at first the primitive Inhabitants of the City of *Rome*, only bore the Name of *Romans* from their first Founder *Romulus*; yet afterwards the *Sabines*, and other People that were incorporated with them, had the same Name likewise. And why may not all the *Israelites*, which were built upon the Stock of *Judah*, be called as properly by his Name, as all the mixed Citizens of *Rome*, by that of *Romulus*? Now, unless we should expect, that *Jacob*, in this prophetick Blessing of *Judah*, should be so nice, as to descend to all the particular Variations of the *Jewish* Government, he could hardly express the whole national Felicity of all the Tribes, (among whom that of *Judah* should make the greatest Figure, and at last be all in all,) more properly, than by the Scepter's not departing from *Judah*.

Phil. Well! but if this be such a manifest Prophecy of Christ, how came it never to be mentioned by the Writers of the New Testament, who are wont to amass

toge-

together Prophesies, which are not more to the Purpose? Or how come the ancient Fathers, to put such a different Sense upon the Words, and to make the Prophecy to have its Completion in *Herod*?

Cred. As to the former Part of your Question, why this Prophecy was not quoted by the Writers of the New Testament? This I know has been started, and endeavoured to be answered by several learned Men. *Pererius* ^{Why this Prophecy not quoted in the New Testament.} * says the Reason was, because this Prophecy only proved the Time when the *Messias* should come; but did not prove that Christ was the *Messias*. Mons. *Huet's* † Reason is, because this Text singly of its self does not prove Christ to be the *Messias*, but only in Conjunction with others. But I think this to be the truer Account of the Matter; that though the Evangelists were not bound to quote every Text of the Old Testament, which referred to the *Messias*, in Proof of Jesus's being the *Christ*; for that would have obliged them to have transcribed almost the whole Law and the Prophets, *Luke* xvi. 29. Yet they would have hardly omitted this remarkable Passage, if it had been proper to have alleged it, either when the Gospel was preached by our Saviour, or when most of the Gospel-Histories were wrote. If our blessed Saviour had alleged this Text in Proof of his being the *Messias*, and said the Scepter was departing from *Judah* upon his Coming, this would have been apt to have raised too many Jealousies in the Heads of the *Jewish* Government; which might have prejudiced them against his Doctrine too much, and have hindred his Preaching. Neither was it a convincing Argument in the beginning of Christianity, before *Jerusalem* was destroyed, and the People were so dispersed, as they were never like to return again. Now Men could not be absolutely sure, that the Scepter and Legislator were perfectly departed from the *Jews*, till a considerable Time after the Gospels were wrote; and therefore I take this to be a very probable Reason, of this Prophecy being omitted by them.

* Per in Gen. xl ix. † Demons. Evang.

*How the
ancient Fa-
thers inter-
preted this
Prophesy.*

As to your second Question, Why we interpret this Place contrary to the ancient Fathers, who understood it of *Herod*? I Answer: It is true that most of the ancient Fathers did interpret this Place of *Herod*, it may be, from the mistaken Opinions of some of the Jews who lived in *Herod's* Time, who from this Prophesy ill-applied, did flatter him that he was the *Messias*; which was that Sect of the *Herodians*, mentioned in the Gospel, Mat. xxii. 16. Mark xii. 13. as *Tertullian*, *Epiphanius*, and other of the Ancients inform us.

This gave Occasion to many of the primitive Christians to think, that there were some Marks of *Herod's* Government in this Text; and though it could not be referred to *Herod* as the *Messias*, yet they thought it referred to Christ, as born in the Days of *Herod*; who being an *Idumean*, and not of the twelve Tribes, they supposed, that then the Scepter was departed from *Judah*. But, upon the most impartial Consideration, we must needs allow, that the *Scepter's departing from Judah* must have a higher Sense than to signify a bare *Idumean Jew's* coming to the Crown; for he was a *Jew* however, and zealous for their Law, and that Nation lived in a great deal of Splendor under him, nay made a greater Figure than they had done in some Ages before; so that this must be a very jejune Sense, to put upon that Expression of the *Scepter's departing from Judah*, or the *Jews*; because, I say, the *Jews* enjoy'd the Benefit of a Scepter of their own, more eminently, than they had done a great while before.

But the Devastation of the City, and Dispersion of the People, in *Titus's* Expedition, was a *departing of the Scepter* in good Earnest; and therefore this does much better suit with the Words of the Prophesy, than the Succession of *Herod*. And this was the Opinion of some of the most considerable of the Ancients too, as particularly of *Justin Martyr*, who in his Colloquy with *Trypho the Jew*, has these Words: *There is none of you who can be so confident to assert, or are able to shew, that there was ever wanting a Prophet, or a Prince, in your Nation,*

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from the very beginning of it, till after the Time when this Jesus Christ was born, and had suffered. For though you say that Herod, under whose Reign he was born, was an Ascalonite; yet you must needs allow, that you had an High-Priest of your own Race, who offered up Sacrifices, and perform'd other Things according to your Law, and there was a Succession of the Prophets down to John. And when, after the Subdiction of your Country, your People were carried away to Babylon, and all your Holy Vessels taken away, the Prophet among you did not cease, who was your Lord, and Leader, and Governour. For the Spirit, which was in your Prophets, did anoint and appoint your Kings. But after the Appearing, and the Death of our Christ, who was of your Blood, you never had, nor have now, any more a Prophet; nay, ever since you have ceased to be governed by a King of your own.

So that, you see, this holy Martyr refers the Completion of this Prophecy to the Time after the Death of Christ, when the Jewish Government ceased; and sets aside the other Opinion, which referred it to Herod's being an Ascalonite.

Nay, that the Mahometans themselves took this Text in the Sense as I have now explained it, I will give you a remarkable Instance out of an Arabick Writer, Ahmed Ibn. Idris, quoted by Hottinger, *Thesaur. Phil.* lib. 1. cap. 2. *The Text of the Law confirms the Prophecy of Jesus, upon whom be Peace, when he says, The Scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a Law-giver from his Feet till the Messias come.* Which has come to pass, for there were not wanting Kings to the Jews, nor an Empire, till Messias's Time, upon whom be Peace. But then they became a vile Opprobry and a captive People, which is so true they cannot deny. And this is an evident Argument for the Truth of the Prophecy concerning Isa, or Jesus, upon whom be Peace. For Moses, of pious Memory, did foretell, That they should be addicted to Vanity or Lying, and that the Messias should bring Truth, which should drive away Vanity or Lying. This is a very surprising Testimony from an Infidel, in behalf of our Religion; and since you Deists, and the Mahometans, have been so gracious of late, I desire you would learn of them,

to treat our Saviour with the same good Breeding, at least, that they do.

Phil. Well, Sir, but what think you of Balaam's Prophesy of Christ? Would God Almighty, think you, be beholden, for a Prophesy of the *Messias*, from an *Edomites* Fortune-teller? All that I can find by the Matter is, that the Jews had been dabbling a little, it may be, with the Seer; so that as I told you before, the *Star's coming out of Jacob*, and a *Scepter's rising out of Israel*, is no more than that the *Jews* would be a flourishing People. So that whatever your Apologists and Interpreters say, this is no more a Prophesy of Jesus Christ, than of *William* the Conqueror.

Balaam's Star, Num. xxiv. 17. A Prophesy of Christ. *Cred.* The Words of the Prophesy, you speak of, are these: *I shall see him*, (says Balaam,) *but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall arise out of Israel, and shall smite the Corners of Moab, and destroy all the Children of Seth, &c.* Numb. xxiv. 17. Now let the Meaning of this Prophesy be what it will, you ought not to lay any Unfainness at the Christian's Doors, for applying this to our *Blessed Saviour*, when the *Jews* did before attribute it to the *Messias*. For, not only all the three old Paraphrasts do unanimously explain this Passage of the *Messias*, but some of the Moderns too, as particularly *Maimonides*, who allows the former Part of this Prophesy to belong to the *Messias*, and the latter Part to *David*. And, moreover, it is plain, that in former Times, the *Jews* did understand it of the *Messias*, from the History of the famous Jewish Impostor *Bar-Cuziba* *, who styled himself *Bar-Chocheba*, or the *Son of a Star*, from this Prophesy. And, if we attentively consider the Words of the Prophesy, they do very exactly agree with the History of Jesus Christ: For who can be so properly called a Star as our *Blessed Lord*, who was *that Light who lighteth every one that cometh into the World*; that has diffused the Light of the Gospel throughout so many dark,

* Euseb. Hist. Eccl. Lib. 4.

and formerly idolatrous Corners of the World ? The Scepter, which here is said to rise out of Israel, does very aptly signify the spiritual Kingdom of Christ, or that Divine Government he exercises over his Church, which is made up of so many Christian Nations, and dispersed, more or less, over the Face of the whole Earth. And by the smiting the Corners of Moab, and the Children of Seth, which was a Moabitish Town, is very fitly represented the downfal of so many idolatrous Worships, by the Preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This will appear, to be no forced Sense of the Words, to any one that considers, that there was nothing ever happened half so remarkable among the whole Nation of the Jews, as this spiritual Kingdom of Christ. No one, of all their Kings or Princes, ever made one Quarter of the Figure in the World as our Blessed Saviour ; or could pretend to deserve the Name of a Star, in Competition with him. What are the little inconsiderable Conquests of that Nation, to the mighty Success of the Preaching of the Gospel ? And, how little did the Polity of that small People deserve to be taken Notice of, and pointed out to Heathen Nations, as a considerable Scepter, in Comparison with the diffusive Extent of the Gospel-Dispensation ? To put any other Sense upon the Words, must be a very frigid and jejune Interpretation, in respect of this. It is true, indeed, that David, who was King of the Israelites, did conquer the Moabites ; but this was a very inconsiderable Victory, to compare with the Triumphs of Christ over the Kingdom of Darkness ; who, not only introduced the Light of the Gospel in Idumea, but dispersed it throughout the whole idolatrous World.

As for your fly Reflection, upon a supposed Correspondence between the Jews and Balaam, who you think was bribed into their Interest ; I am sure, you have no Foundation for that in Scripture, which always represents Balaam very zealous for his Prince Balak, and endeavouring to serve him, though against his Conscience : So that I look upon this only as a fine side-wind Jest,

that may squint a little upon the Clergy ; it being grown very fashionable of late, and a Piece of Gallantry, to wound their Profession, through the Sides of *Popish* Priests, or Heathen Necromancers. And if I should answer to this in good Earnest, I should only create you more of this Diversion ; and therefore, I pray, Sir, proceed to something else.

Phil. Then what say you, *Credentius*, to *Isaiah's* Virgin, or young Woman ? How can that be a Prophesy of Christ, when it had its Completion even in *Isaiah's* Time, or else it could be no Sign to King *Abaz*, to confirm his Belief in what the Prophet told him ?

Cred. The Words in *Isaiah* are these ; *Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a Sign, behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his Name Immanuel.*

Butter and Honey, &c. *Isa.* vii. 14. Now, though you could fasten another more probable Sense on these Words, than its being a Prophesy of Christ ; or, though you could prove it not at all to be so ; yet the Writers of the New Testament are not to be charged, with any sinister Dealing in this Matter, because this Text was interpreted by the *Jews*, just as it is by the Christians, *viz.* as Prophetick of the *Messias*, who from this and other Places of Scripture, they did universally agree, was to be born of a Virgin. I will instance in two or three Authorities, and refer you, for farther Satisfaction, to the Writings of learned Men upon this Subject *. An ancient *Jewish* Book, called, *Bemidder Rabba*, says, *This Place is understood, not only of Hezekiah, but also of the Messias.* Where by the Way you may take Notice, that those *Jews*, who would have this Prophesy to be understood of *Hezekiah*, are of Opinion, that he was miraculously born of a Virgin. But *Justin Martyr* has sufficiently proved, in his Colloquy with *Tryphon*, that this Prophesy could not be understood of *Hezekiah* ;

* Vid. *Jos. Voisin Obs.* in Proæm. *Pug. Fid.* p. 124. *Raymond Martin.* Par. III. Dist. 3. cap. 7. *Galat. de Arcanis Ver.* lib. 7. cap. 14.

and, from the Chronology of the Bible it is plain, that *Hezekiah* was born many Years, before this Prophesy was given. But to go on with the Jewish Opinions, about the Birth of the *Messias* from a Virgin. I will give you next the Authorities of two Jewish Rabbies, which to those who have not heard of them before, will be very surprising ; and which are most remarkable Proofs, both of the Divinity of Christ, and of his Birth of a Virgin ; especially if those Authors, from whence these Authorities are brought, lived, as *Galatinus* supposes, long before the blessed Virgin was born. Rabbi *Simeon Ben Johai*, in a Commentary upon *Genesit*, written in the ancient Hebrew Tongue, on the Words : *Let us make Man after our own Image*, among other Things, says, &c. **חוֹטָמָא בְּחִיטָמָא**, Face by Face, or Person by Person, leads us to the Knowledge of Faces or Persons. Mind what is the Difference, between the Ancient and the Junior of Faces. This is the JEHOVAH, who placed a living Face in the Woman, which Face is the Man from Life, proceeding from Life. This, moreover, is the Face of Paradise, wherein dwells the Spirit of the Junior of Faces. But the Woman bends her Knee and asks Pardon of the Spirit which is sent into her ; which Spirit went out from the highest Throne of the Godhead, to one particular Woman. And the Spirit which went out, is the Spirit of the Junior of Days, resting in the Delights of Paradise. And he is the Spirit of Lives, who of old was prepared before Time in the Son of David, to perceive Wisdom. And from this Woman, the Spirit being awakened or roused up by a mighty Power, he went out from an unopened Womb, prepared to be the most High Prince. And he is the King Messias. Of whom it is written, The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of Knowledge and Understanding, the Spirit of Counsel and Fortitude, the Spirit of Wisdom and the Fear of God. These are the four Ways in which this* Spirit is to come ; and there is one only Spirit our JEHOVAH, distinct from the three Faces. Rabbi Joses said, In the Days of King Messias, one shall not say to another, teach me Knowledge : Because it is written, hereafter

one Man shall not teach his Brother, because all shall know me, from their little ones to their great ones. And in that Time the Ancient of Days shall awake, and the Spirit which goes out of the shut or unopened Womb. And when he shall arise, all the Spirits shall rise with him. And who are they? Those which are honoured with the Holy Crowns of the Junior of Faces. Whether or no these Rabbies lived before Christ, as Galatinus supposes, matters not much; but, however, they are remarkable Instances of the Opinion of the Jewish Church, concerning the Divinity of the Messias, and his Incarnation; and do deserve the serious Consideration of the Deists and Socinians, and should teach them more Civility, than to deride these Doctrines of the Christian Church, of which there was such a manifest Tradition in the Jewish. Nor is this the singular Opinion of these two ancient Rabbins; but others likewise declare, that the Messias was not to be born after the Way of human Conception. *Rabbi Moses Hadarschan on Gen. xxxvii. 12.* The Redeemer or Messias, whom I shall raise up unto you, shall not have a Father, according to that of Zachary; Behold the Man, whose Name is the Branch, and he shall grow up out of his Place. And as Isa. liii. 2. he shall grow up before him as a tender Plant, and as a Root out of a dry Ground. And David says of him, Psal. cx. 3. Thy Birth is as the Dew of the Morning. So R. Solomon Farchi, explaining this Psalm, says, that the Dew mentioned in this Psalm, which is a Prophesy of the Messias, is a Dew from the Lord, which does never come from Man. And the like is said by Bereshith Rabba upon that of Gen. iv. 25. God has appointed me another Seed instead of Abel. It was a saying of R. Tanchuma, namely, That Seed which came from another Place. And what is that? It is the King Messias. That is, the Messias was to come into the World, not by the Way of mortal Conception. But I am afraid, Philologus, I shall tire you with these Rabbinical Citations, which I know you have no Affection for; but I thought them very proper to clear the Way to the Explication of this famous Prophesy, concerning the

the Birth of Jesus Christ from a Virgin. And now I shall give you my Sense of the Meaning of the Prophecy, and how I think it had its Completion, at the Birth of our Saviour Christ. I will not trouble you here with any Bustle about first or literal, and secondary Senses of Scripture, a Fancy very much in Vogue ever since *Socinus's* Time, who was for running all Prophecy into this Notion. I shall only shew what Part of this Prophecy had its Completion in *Ahaz's* Time, and what at the Birth of Christ.

The Occasion of the Delivery of this Prophecy, was this. About the beginning of *Ahaz's* Reign, who was King of *Judah*, and Father of *Hezekiah*, *Rezin* the King of *Syria*, and *Pekah* the Son of *Remaliah* King of *Israel*, with joint Forces, made a Descent upon *Judea*, and besieged *Jerusalem*; in which, though they succeeded not, yet considerable Ravage was made over all the Country, especially by the King of *Israel's* Army, as is particularly recorded in the second Book of *Chronicles*. When *Ahaz* and his Court were first alarmed by this dreadful News, they were struck, as must be imagined upon such an Occasion, by a very great Fear; or as the Prophet elegantly expresses it, *His Heart was moved, and the Heart of his People, as the Trees of the Wood are moved with the Wind.* In the midst of this great Consternation, *Isaiah* the Prophet is sent as a Comforter to him; bidding him not be *afraid of the two Tails of these smoaking Firebrands*, to which he compares the two hostile Kings; and assuring him, that they should not prosper in their cruel Enterprise. *Ahaz* could not, it seems, frame himself to a Belief of so comfortable a Message: And therefore God was pleased, so far to comply with him, as to promise him, that the Prophet, for his Sake should do a Sign or Miracle to convince him of the Truth of what he delivered; nay, he left it to the King's Choice to demand, what Sign or Miracle he pleased. *Ask thee a Sign of the Lord thy God; ask it either in the Depth, or in the Height above.* *Ahaz* remains incredulous still, and seems to have no Regard to what the Prophet said to him;

him ; only he returns him this surly Answer : *I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord.* At which Answer, the holy Prophet seems somewhat concern'd, and therefore rebukes him for his Incredulity ; but still gives him hopes of his Deliverance : *Hear ye now, O House of David ! Is it a small Thing for you to weary Men, but will you weary my God also ? Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a Sign, behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his Name Immanuel.* Butter and Honey shall be eat, that he may know to refuse the Evil and chuse the Good. For before the Child shall know to refuse the Evil and chuse the Good, the Land which thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her Kings. Now all perhaps that *Ahaz*, at that Time, could be supposed to have understood by these Words, is this : That there should be a certain young Woman, then a Virgin, who should have a Son upon her first bringing forth ; and before this Child should know Good from Evil, that is, be able to know the Benefits of Peace from the Miseries of War, that Invasion should be at an End ; and the Child should eat *Butter and Honey*, that is, enjoy all the Pleasures and Satisfactions of a settled Peace. And the Prophecy in this Sense was compleated soon after. For in the next Chapter *Isaiah* says, *He went unto the Prophetess, and she conceived and bare a Son ; then said the Lord, call his Name Maher-shalal-hash-baz. For before the Child shall have knowledge to cry my Father and my Mother, the Riches of Damascus, and the Spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the King of Assyria.* This is a plain historical Relation, of a great deal of the Event portended by this Prophecy, and therefore it cannot be denied, but that it was in great Measure understood of the Conception of this young Prophetess, which was espoused to *Isaiah*. And they have very little Reason on their Side, who assert, That this Conception of *Isaiah's* Wife in the 8th Chapter, has no Relation to the Prophecy in the 7th. Whereas it is plain that almost every Thing in the latter is said to fall out as it was predicted in the former. He is married to a *Virgin Prophetess* ; and she *conceived and bare a Son*, which is related in the very Words of the Prophecy ; and, before

before this Child should arrive to a rational Knowledge, *Judea* was to be delivered from its Invaders. Only that Passage is related a little indifferently; what is in the Prophesy of the 7th Chapter, called, The Child's knowing *to refuse the Evil, and chuse the Good*, is in the 8th expressed, by having knowledge *to cry my Father and my Mother*; and what in the 7th, is expressed by *the Land shall be forsaken of both her Kings*, is in the 8th worded, *The Riches of Damascus, and the Spoil of Samaria, shall be taken away before the King of Assyria*. That is, the great King of *Assyria* shall kill *Rezin* King of *Syria*, one of the invading Princes, and destroy *Damascus*'s Capital City; and as for the King of *Israel*, his City shall be plundered, and the King himself murdered by his Successor; which came to pass within a Year or two, as the Prophesy foretold, *Vid. 2 King. chap. xv. and xvi.* which is tantamount to what is said in the 7th Chapter of *Isaiah*, v. 16. *The Land which thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her Kings.*

I think it is plain, by what has been said, against all Manner of Exception; that this Passage had a great deal of its Completion, in the Time of *Ahaz*. But then I farther contend, that these Words must of Necessity, not only have another mystical Meaning, as some will have it, but must imply a great deal more in their literal Sense; or else there will be so many Improprieties in the Expressions, that we cannot suppose so elegant, and so exact a Writer, as *Isaiah*, could be guilty of. If we consider only the usual Purport of the word *Virgin*, any one would be apt to think, that something more was meant, than *Isaiah's* marrying a Virgin, who should afterwards have a Son. There is something very emphatical and surprising in the Words, *a Virgin shall conceive*; and it would certainly have been expressed thus, *Isaiah, or his Wife, shall have a Child*, if no more was meant by it, than that ordinary Birth, which was before mentioned. It is ushered in with an Admiration, *Bethold!* which would be a strange Impropriety of Speech, if no more was to be understood, than that a Male Child should be conceived, after the usual Way. Besides, here is the Name of the Child

Child altogether as remarkable : *And shall call his Name Immanuel, or God with us.* Such a Name as this, imposed by God himself, is very wonderful, and must needs import the Person it referred to, to be of a greater Character, than that obscure Son of *Isaiah*. Nay, what Person in all sacred History can be found, to whom this Name can, with any tolerable Propriety, agree, besides our blessed Saviour ; who was truly God with us, a Person of the Trinity, assuming human Nature ? You cannot say, that this was the Name of *Isaiah's* Son, for he is said to be called, upon his Birth, *Maher-shalal-hash-baz*, Isa. viii.3. Therefore the Name *Immanuel* must refer to some other Person, who I say must be our Lord Jesus ; because no other Person can be assigned besides, whom this Name can, with any Congruity, be ascribed to. And farther, in this Passage it is said, *The Lord shall give you a Sign or a Miracle.* And what a mighty Miracle is it, that a young married Woman should have a Child ? It was indeed a remarkable Prediction, That the first Child should be a Male, and that *Judea* should be in an unexpected Way delivered, by that Time this Child should be a Year, or two, old. But then, I say, it does not at all seem proper, that this Prediction should be brought in, after such an unwonted Manner, with a *Behold !* as if such a Thing never happened before ; whereas the *Jews* had many Deliverances as great, and some more remarkable than this Preservation from that Invasion. The Miracle, or Sign, is said to be of God's own giving, *The Lord shall give you a Sign* ; and therefore it must be expected, that something more is couched under the Word, than the bare Prediction of this temporary Deliverance. These Considerations weighed so much with the ancient *Jews* and *Christians*, that they looked upon this Passage, as a Prediction of the *Messias* ; because the Words could not be altogether applied to *Isaiah's* Son. I am very well assured, that such a Way of Interpretation looks very odd to you, *Philologus*, who are only used to profane Authors ; among whom nothing, like this, is to be seen. But if you were conversant in Jewish Books, you would see in

in them a great deal of such Exposition, especially concerning the *Messias*; whom, they say, the Prophets are wont to reveal upon all Occasions, and to give many glancing Predictions of Him, oftentimes, when their Subject engages them upon other Matter. And therefore, when the Apostles draw Arguments from these Sort of Predictions, which are occasionally brought in, amidst the Prosecution of other Matters; it shews them, to be so far from Insincerity, or that their Writings are supposititious, that it is a very clear Argument, that their Works are genuine, and their Consequences true. For what better Explication of any Text, to confirm an Opinion, could be expected, than the Exposition which had obtain'd for some Ages, in a National Church? This would have all the Power imaginable to convince, nor would it be liable to the usual Objections, of New-fangledness or Innovation. But, if the Apostles had criticised upon the Passages of the Old Testament, like our modern Expositors, you perhaps would have liked it better upon first Thoughts; though, upon more serious Consideration, their Writings would, for this Reason, have been ten Times more liable to Exceptions, than now they are. Suppose the Apostles should have explained Scripture, by shewing the Sense of the Words, as they are used in other Places of the Bible; by quoting of *Lexicons*, and citing some parallel Arguments, out of prophane Authors; who would ever have believed, that such a Composition was made by one that, *seventeen hundred Years ago*, was bred up amongst the Nation of the *Jews*, amongst whom such Sort of Learning was never in Fashion? If they had laid out their Labours after this Manner, I am confident, *Philologus*, you would have been the first Man, that for this Reason would have arraigned them for Impostors. But when such Men, as the Apostles were, of no Literature and Education, that never spent their Time in the Schools of the *Rabbies*, should explain the Predictions of the *Messias* just in their Way; should be such eminent Masters in their Learning; should confirm the Truth of their Lord's *Mission*, by their Adversaries own Arguments; and should be so excellently

cellently versed, in their *Traditionaly Explications* of the more remarkable Prophesies : This is a wonderful Confirmation of our *Religion*, and, give me Leave to say, is a total Overthrow of all the Cavils of the Modern *Jews*, and is the Glory and Triumph of Christianity.

I think there is no Need to make any considerable Stay, for the Confutation of your Objection, against the Sense of the Word *Gnalmah*; which you will not allow always to signify a *Virgin*, from that Text in the *Proverbs*, chap. xxx. v. 19 and 20. *There are three Things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not : The Way of an Eagle in the Air, the Way of a Serpent upon a Rock, the Way of a Ship in the midst of the Sea, and the Way of a Man with a (Gnalmah or) Maid.* Such is the Way of an adulterous Woman : She eateth, and wipeth her Mouth, and saith, *I have done no Wickedness.* For it is not necessary to be granted, that the *Adulterous Woman* (in the second Verse) should be the same with the *Maid* in the former : Nay, they seem to be perfectly different, and the First to be a Simily or Illustration of the Latter. For the wise Man instances in three or four Things which leave no Foot-steps or Traces behind them ; as the Flying of Birds, which leaves no Track in the Air ; the Creeping of a Serpent, which has no Feet to make an Impression upon the Ground ; the Sailing of a Ship, when the Water still closes up again as soon as the Ship has passed through it ; and as the Way of a Man with a Maid, between whom there are usually such secret Courtships and Addresses, as they will not discover. And to these *Impervestigabilia*, which Men can find no Traces of, the wise Man compares the Artifices of an *Adulterous Woman* ; which are very handsomely, indeed, set forth by the foregoing Illustrations. But what a Jest is it, I pray, that a Thing should be compared to it self? as it must be, if the *Adulterous Woman* in the latter Verse, be the *Maid* in the former. For how can any one think, that the wise Man could talk so little Sense, as to say, That an Adulterous Woman is like an Adulterous Woman? Which is such an odd Sort of childish tautological Talk, as the Propriety

of no Language, nor any common Sense, will bear. And therefore, I wonder, how the modern *Jews* should so triumph, as they do, upon the Use of the Word *Gnalmah*, for a lewd Woman, in this Place; since it must be not only a very forced Exposition of the Words, to make it signify so, but will make the Sense of the Place perfectly incongruous.

Phil. But must *Rachel's crying for her Children*, Jer. xxxi. 15. and *Out of Ægypt have I called my Son*, Hos. xi. 2. be understood after this typical Way of Prefiguration likewise, or that prophetick Excursion, which you seem to hint at?

Cred. I told you before, *Philologus*, that several of these Passages might be fairly accounted for, by Way of Accommodation, and that St. *Matthew* here might only, perhaps, make Use of the Words of those ancient Books, and put another Sense of his own upon them; which is very often used among all Writers. But for my part, I believe that these Texts, here quoted, were by the *Jews*, in our Saviour's Time, generally looked upon as a Predictive of the *Messias*, and as referring to some Passages of his Life. Which can hardly be denied by any one who is acquainted with the Jewish Way of Explication of Scripture; and, if there were many of their ancient Books remaining, might, I doubt not, be most clearly evinced. And indeed some of the modern *Jews* grant us, that the Text of *Hosea*, *Out of Ægypt have I called my Son*, is understood of the *Messias*: For generally their Commentators allow *, that this of *Hosea xi. 2.* has the same Sense as *Psal. lxxx. 9. I have brought a Vine out of Ægypt*. And this last Passage such a wary Commentator as *Aben Ezra* himself, in his Notes upon this *Psalms*, will have to be understood, not only of *Israel*, but of the *Messias*.

Phil. And what do you say to those *Psalms* which are usually brought for Prophesies of the *Messias*, when they plainly appear only made upon *David*, or *Solomon*.

* *Shemoth. Rabba. Sect. 43; 44.*

These were ridiculous Notions of Prayer, which our Saviour has commanded his Followers to avoid; and moreover not to be positive in their Petitions, but to refer all to the good Pleasure and Wisdom of God, desiring after all, that *his Will be done.*

No Sauciness to pray to God.

2. Neither do Christians with Malepartnes, or Sauciness put up their Prayers to God, but with that Modesty and Humility which becomes Creatures toward their Creator. 'Tis no Want of respect to ask my Sovereign a Request, when he has commanded me to ask him: But God Almighty has commanded us to pray to him, and to come with Boldnes to the Throne of Grace; and therefore 'tis our Duty to do so. And whereas you tax our Notion of Prayer with attributing a Weaknes to the Deity to be importun'd or praised, I think your Notion does the same much more. For you judge God Almighty to be like an earthly Prince, that is not to be address to by every one, by Reason of the Multiplicity of Affairs of a higher Nature, which take up most of his Time, and so is not to be disturbed by the Applications of little People, whose Suits are therefore deem'd impertinent. But, since we are sure there can be no Distraction of Thoughts, or Streightnes of Time in God, we know he is as open and free to receive at all Times, a Suit from the meanest of Mankind, as from the most exalted of the Angels.

Prayer for Rain not for a Miracle.

3. Neither do Christians in their Prayers to God for Rain, Fair-weather, or any other Benefit, expect that God should miraculously disturb the Powers of Nature. God is the God of Nature, as well as of Mankind, and has promised to give us the Fruits of the Earth in their due Season, and all other needful Things to those that ask him. He sends Rains, and Droughts, and Floods, or Fair-weather, either for the Benefit or Punishment of Mankind. I grant that in the ordinary Course of Nature, such a Quantity of Water is evaporated every Day from the Sea; which Vapours when they grow so numerous and weighty, that they can no longer be suspended in the Air, fall down upon the Earth in Rains and Show-

ers,

ers: But then God Almighty, by his Providence, frequently interposes, that more of them shall fall in one Place than in another, to punish Mankind for their Faults, and this is a Jurisdiction, which God continually keeps over Nature, for the Government of the World; or else Nature would be God, and not he, and Men would not have that Dependence upon him which they ought. Now the Exercise of this Jurisdiction cannot be called properly a Miracle. For a Miracle is a violent Perturbation of the Laws of Nature, a wonderful and uncommon Superseding of them, as when Fire is made not to burn, or Iron to swim in the Water; but this providential Interposition is a gentle leading and direction of Nature, in a Course not much different from her settled Laws, is ordinary and frequent, and so not generally admired. Nature it self is all originally miraculous, and owing to a Divine Power, but by being frequently visible, is not so surprising; and this Law of providential Interposition is as much God's Natural Law in governing the World, as the others are in preserving it. 'Tis to this Interposition of Divine Providence, that Christians in their Prayers appeal; and this is more rational and agreeable to the Wisdom and Goodness of God, and the humble Dependence of a Creature, than any other fanciful Schemes of a Physical Predetermination, or an Atheistical Fatality.

4. Nor do we pray to God, as thinking thereby to weary him out by importunate Solicitations, or to give him a Knowledge of our Wants, &c. but we ask because he has commanded us, and upon our so doing, has told us we shall receive. And there is the same Reason, why God should require Prayer of us, as he should do any other Moral Duty; because this makes us better Men. The frequent Returns of this Duty calls us off from the Consideration of worldly Things, and put us upon the Meditation of the Divine Nature, his Wisdom, Justice and Goodness; to the end, that by frequently contemplating them, we may imitate those adorable Perfections. And the doing this every Day, will much more influence

Almighty himself speaking from Heaven: *I will declare the Decree, Thou art my Son, this Day have I begotten Thee, &c.* And now what a strange Excursion, and Abrupton in the Sense, is this? If the Prophet had only gone on upon the ordinary Subject he was upon before, there would be no Need of this unusual Introduction of the Deity, with this Speech, *I will declare the Decree, &c.* (i. e.) I will (as some explain it) open to you Mortals the recondite Decrees of my eternal Will, That King *David* shall still be King of *Israel*, now his Enemies are vanquished. What a poor jejune Interpretation of these noble Words is *this*? This is making a Mountain to teem with a Mouse; this is to father such an Absurdity upon an inspired and a very elegant Writer, which would be insufferable in any Author whatsoever. No, certainly, there is a more elevated Sense of these Words, which I take to be this: The inspired *Psalmyst*, after he had given an Account, in this Composition, of his own Success in relation to the Crown of *Israel*, breaks out into another Field of Matter, and goes on to sing of the more glorious Kingdom of the *Messias*. He brings in the Person of God speaking first of the Generation of this great Person, *Thou art my Son, this Day have I begotten thee*. These Words are so improper to be attributed to *David*, that all the ancient *Jews* explained them of the *Messias**; and this *R. Kimchi* himself owns in his Comment upon this *Psalm*, where he says, *That these Words, Thou art my Son, &c. have been explained by our Doctors of pious Memory, as a Prophecy of the Messias, and the Psalm is very clear, being explained this Way; but it is better to say that David spoke this of himself.* And we find, that not only these Jewish Rabbins, but *St. Peter*, Act. iv. 25. and *St. Paul*, Heb. i. 5. attribute this Passage to Christ, which they never would have done, if it had not been understood, as a Prophecy of Christ, in those Times. And if this be understood of Christ, the Sense is very natural, and the Expression

* *Vid. Pocock. Not. Miscel. in Port. Mos.*

proper. But, in what tolerable Sense, can God Almighty be said to beget *David*? Indeed, God Almighty is a common Father to us all, by reason of his creating us, and providing for us; but then no one says, upon this Account, God Almighty *begets* us; but that he made us, or takes Care of us. But Dr. *Hammond*, who, with *Socinus* and *Grotius*, is for running every Prophesy into a primary and secondary Sense, that he may with more Congruity apply these Words to *David*, brings in a like Expression, as he thinks, of *Spartian* the Historian, in the Life of *Adrian*, *Natalis adoptionis erat*; *Id. August.* & *Natalis Imperii*. And so might *David*, if he pleased, have called his Inauguration-Day his Birth-Day, without any great Impropriety. But to say, God begot him that Day, is such an odd and unmannerly sort of Metaphor, which neither *Spartian*, nor *David*, nor any other Man of tolerable Sense, can be supposed to be guilty of. But by the By, when the Apostle, *Heb.* i. argues from this wonderful Generation, the Superiority of Christ above all the Angels; it is hardly decent for any Christian to make this *begetting* (especially when it is ushered in with such a remarkable Preface) to be nothing else but God's placing *David* upon the Throne. God Almighty is recorded in Scripture to have done several mighty Things for other Persons; but he is never said to *beget* them; and no Instances can be produced of this Nature. Besides, God Almighty is said to have given the Person here spoken of, *the Heathen for his Inheritance, and the uttermost Parts of the Earth for his Possession*. But when, I pray, was *David* in Possession of the uttermost Parts of the Earth? His Kingdom was bounded within the Territories of a small Country. And what Heathen Nations was he the Governour of? He exhorts to *Kiss the Son*, which was the *Eastern Way* of Adoration in Divine Worship; and therefore *David* cannot be supposed to require it to himself. Nay, what Place in all Scripture can be alleged where any Person is called emphatically *The Son*, besides Christ? *Blessed are all they that put their Trust in him!* says the Psalmist here. But what a blasphemous

Expression is this, for *David* to say of himself! Any one who has look'd into *David's Psalms*, knows that it is his Doctrine, That Men should put their Trust only in God. Therefore, I conclude, this Trust, which has such Blessedness entailed upon it here, must be a Trust in God, and not a Trust in the Power and Defence of a Prince, which, in many Places of Scripture, has a Curse entailed upon it, as particularly *Jer. xvii. 5.* *Cursed is he who trusteth in Man.* All these are such manifest Characters of the *Messias*, and can so little agree to *David*, that any impartial Reader must allow some other Person to be understood here; which Person the Church of God, in all Ages, has agreed to be the *Messias*. I will now only give you some cursory Reflections upon the LXXII. & CX. *Psalm*, which you object against; and then I hope I shall have cleared this Matter pretty well.

LXXII
Psalm, a
Prophecy
of Christ.

As for the LXXII *Psalm*, I own it might be a Design of *David*, when he composed it, to write of his Son *Solomon*, after he had been anointed for his Successor in the Kingdom by *Zadok*; and *David*, his Father, had seen him publickly inaugurated, *1 King i. 1.* And therefore King *David* designs to make use of this *Psalm*, as a Form of Prayer, to commend his Son to the Blessing of God, upon that great Undertaking. But the Holy Spirit of God, which inspired this prophetick Prince, carried off his Thoughts from his first designed Subject; and by some imperceptible Means of moving his Mind, made him speak all along afterwards of the *Messias*. It is plain, that at first he began to write of *Solomon* by this, *Give the King thy Judgments, O God, and thy Righteousness unto the King's Son*, v. 1. But then, on a sudden, he falls a describing the Kingdom of a Person, which is perfectly unlike that of *Solomon*. *His Kingdom shall last as long as the Sun and Moon endures, throughout all Generations*, v. 5. And universal Peace and Righteousness is said to be in his Days, v. 7 & 8. But when did *Solomon's Government extend to the Ends of the Earth*, v. 8. and *all Nations serve him?* v. 11. How can it be understood of this Prince, that *all Nations should be blessed in him*; when perhaps

perhaps half the Nations of the World never heard of him? These Considerations weighed so much with the Jews, that they, in all Ages, have explained this Psalm of the *Messias*. And I question not but David himself, when he uses the Words, *All Nations of the World should be blessed in him*, had regard to that old Promise of the *Messias* to Abraham, Gen. xviii. That in his Seed should all the Nations of the Earth be blessed. The two Jewish Commentators, *R. Obadiah*, and *Aben Ezra*, say this Psalm is a Prophecy of the *Messias*. And the Midrash, or Exposition upon the Psalm, upon these Words, *Give thy Judgments to the King*, says, *This is the King Messias*. And in the Talmud, when the Question is asked, What is the Name of the *Messias*? It is answered **Jinnon*, from the 17th Verse of this Psalm, *His Name shall endure for ever*. And *R. Solomon Farchi*, and *Kimchi*, say, that all their old *Rabbins* explained this Psalm of King *Messias*; and *Kimchi* particularly says, that this is to be understood properly of the *Christ*, but hyperbolically only of Solomon.

But as for the CX Psalm, I look upon that, from the beginning to end, to be a Prophecy only of Christ. And so did those, who lived about the Time of the Preaching of the Gospel, as appears by that Question of our Saviour to the Pharisees, about the *Messias*, out of this Psalm. *The Lord said unto my Lord, &c. If David call him Lord* (says he) *how is he his Son?* Which plainly shews, that the Jews, to whom he put this Question, explained this Psalm of the *Messias*. And so this Psalm is explained of Christ, *Heb. i. 13. and x. 13.* And so likewise it is interpreted by *Trypho*, in *Justin Martyr*. And tho' some of the modern Jews, out of Spight to Christianity, have interpreted this Psalm as wrote upon *Abraham* or *Melchizedeck*, though without any Ground; yet there are not wanting some of them, who attribute it to the *Messias*. Although the Midrash upon the Psalms interprets this of *Abraham*, *The Lord said unto my Lord, &c.* yet it is added, *And this is likewise the Speech*

CX Psalm,
a Prophecy
of Christ.

* Vid. Glassii Phil. Sacr. p. 99.

of God to the Messias. *R. Obadiah*, upon this *Psalm*, explains the whole of the *Messiah*; so doth *R. Saadia Gaon* upon *Daniel*; and so do two ancient Rabbins, *R. Barachias*, and *R. Levi*, quoted by *R. Moses Ben. Nachman*. It is plain, therefore, that the most unprejudiced and ancient *Jews* have interpreted this Psalm of the *Messias*, as well as the *Christians*; and if you attentively consider the Matter, you will find they had great Reason so to do. For the Title of this Psalm says, it is a Psalm of *David*; therefore *David* must be the Person that speaks. And now see, if any other tolerable Sense can be put upon the Words, besides that which the Generality of *Christians*, and ancient *Jews*, understand them in; *The Lord said unto my Lord, &c.* What Person, besides the *Messias*, could *Jehovah* speak unto, whom *David* could properly call *Lord*; and that with a particular Emphasis, *my Lord*? He was an independent Prince, and owed Subjection to no one in the World; and therefore he cannot be supposed to call any one *Lord*, but a Person of the *Godhead*, who was the supreme *Lord* of all Things. The Apostle, *Heb. i. 13.* does very well argue, That it is a Character above that of the supreme Angels, to say to any one, *Sit thou on my Right Hand*, and agreeing only to that of the eternal Son of God. Who, besides our blessed Saviour, could be said to be a *Priest for ever*? Surely, not *David* himself, in whose Time there was no Priesthood known but the *Astronomical*, and when no such unwonted Honour, as the *Melchizedechian* Priesthood, was ever heard of? For the same Person to be a King and a Priest, was a Thing never used in those Times; and therefore the Expression must refer to the Time of the *Messias*. Under the old Law, the Priesthood was a Thing perfectly distinct from the Kingly Office; and we find, *2 Chr. xxvi. 20.* that King *Uzziah* was smote with a *Leprosy*, for his usurping it. And therefore I cannot but wonder at the Perverseness of some of the Modern *Jews*, who will, with so much Force and Straining, interpret this Psalm otherwise than of the *Messias*; contrary to the universal Opinion of their Fore-fathers,

sathers, and in Opposition to all common Sense. And, as I observed to you before, I cannot but as much admire, how much the Truth of the Christian Religion doth display itself, in making use, all along the New Testament, of those ancient traditional Explications of the Prophesies, which were from the first uttering of them retained in that Nation ; whilst many of the *Jews* themselves, pertinaciously to defend their Errors, have been forced to desert them.

Phil. But by the By, *Credentius*, I do not find any Fault in the *Jews* for this ; for it is never a Crime to rectify an Error, and if they found their ancient Explications would not hold Water, let them find out some other Expositions that will. That old traditional *Faith* of theirs, which you, it seems, set so much by, was as much run down by Jesus Christ : And for my Part, I cannot think but these strained sort of Expositions you have dwelt so long upon, are as ridiculous as their washing of Platters and Cups, and their false Notion of the temporal Kingdom of the *Messias*.

Cred. You very much mistake the Matter, *Philologus* : For our Saviour does not find any Fault with the Jewish Explication of the Prophesies, but with their false Glos-
ses upon several Moral Duties of the Law, and with their taking more Care to be exact in legal and ritual Performances, than in a good Life. He endeavours to set them right in the Nature of the Kingdom of the *Messias* ; telling them *it was not of this World*, when they grossly imagined it was to be a *temporal Kingdom*. And in these Points, their false Comments, for which they vouched ancient Tradition, though falsely, needed Rectification and Amendment ; but you do not find that our Saviour ever blames them for ill explaining the Prophesies, and taking those Places for Predictions of the *Messias*, which were not. These were Things, which they received, in their Books and Traditions, uncorruptly from their Fore-fathers ; because no Byass of any corrupt Affections, or sinister Ends, could give them Temptation to make any Variation in them. Nay, the Notions of the *Messias*, long

long before the Coming of Christ, were so usual among the *Jews*; and the common Places, where he was predicted in the Old Testament, were so obvious to all, and so universally explained in the same Manner; that it was impossible they should have prevaricated in this Matter, if they would. All Parties were agreed in these Things; neither Christ, nor his Apostles, find fault with the *Jews* for their Explications, nor do the *Jews* blame them for their Citation of Texts, in the Sense their Church had explained them. The *Jews* at that Time never had the Hardness to dispute, whether those Texts were Predictions of the *Messias*? but whether those Characters did agree to *Christ* or no? for the other Matters were incontrovertibly allow'd, till the modern *Jews*, and the other incredulous, have put the Christians upon the Proof of them.

Phil. But still, my good Catechist, you must bring some more evident Prophesies of Christ, than these you have alleged, or else, notwithstanding all the Pains you have laid out upon me, I shall remain in the Depth of Infidelity still. These Predictions you have already been discoursing of, are clear but to some dull *Talmudical* Brains, and are proper only to convince the musty Rum-magers among the *Rabbins*, who are wont to take every Thing for a rare Argument, which they find in an old *Hebrew* Book. If these Passages are Prophesies of Christ, they are such slender Glances by the By, as People who have not a great deal of Credulity beforehand, will hardly be convinced by. Let us see, I pray then, something more directly prophetick, and which may not look so like a poetical Ramble of Thoughts, as most of these do.

*Prophesy of
the Call of
the Gentiles
verified in
Christ.*

Cred. It is impossible I should have Time to shew you, how all the Prophesies, which lie every where scattered in the Old Testament, do exactly agree and con-center in our blessed Saviour; for that would require a longer Time, than You and I have Patience to talk together, and you may at your leisure see them made out at large in Commentators upon the Bible, and in the Writings of other learned Defenders of the Christian Faith. I shall only

only pick out two or three of the most remarkable Predictions, and urge them home against the Unbelievers.

And first, I shall begin with the famous foretelling of the *Calling of the Gentiles*, and God's manifesting the true Religion to them. Every one that understands any thing of the History of the *Jews*, knows how great an Aversation they bore to the Heathen Nations, and what dreadful Judgments their Prophets, even with a seeming Spirit of Joy, denounce against *Edom* and *Egypt*, &c. and yet 'tis plain, that these very Prophets, in the same Breath almost, in which they are foretelling these horrid Punishments which would befall those People, frequently fall into a Strain of predicting the greatest Blessings upon them ; foretelling, That, in a While, they should be a People as dear to God as the *Jews* themselves, and That they should have the true Religion, which they had been so long Strangers to, planted among them. The very Way of predicting such blessed Events to hostile Nations, is very astonishing, and without Precedent ; but that these should exactly be compleated, according to the Prediction, is perfectly miraculous. Suppose *thirty* or *forty* bigotted Divines of the *Romish* Church, that had lived in different Times and Places within these *150* Years last past, since the preaching of *Luther*, should, after having said Abundance of hard Things against the *Protestants*, say, That, notwithstanding all this, these hated *Protestants* should be, in a little While, God's peculiar Favourites ; That the present Form of the *Romish* Church should be perfectly destroyed, and the *Protestants* be all in all ; and if there shall be any Sticklers for the present *Roman* Church, that they should be hated and persecuted by God, and dispersed over the Face of the whole Earth : And then supposing this should come to pass in the next Generation, exactly as these Men had foretold in all the particular Circumstances ; who would not allow, that these Men had foretold these Matters by the Assistance of a supernatural Power ; or that God had predicted the Downfal of Anti-christ's Kingdom, by the Lips of his own Priests ; tho' at the same Time it was their

Desire and Interest to support it? I don't, by this, make any Comparison between the Church of the *Jews*, and the Church of *Rome*, in relation to Errors; but only I say, the *Jewish* Prophets had as much Aversion to their Heathen Enemies, as the *Popish* Priests have to us *Protestants*, and therefore could be supposed to prophesy nothing in their Favour; and, there being so many of them of different Times and Places, that all prophesy of the same Event, therefore it could not be a random Guess, which might chance to come to pass: And their Interest being so much engaged in the Welfare of their own **Church**, they could never be supposed, unless by the particular Interposition of God, to harbour a Thought of the Alteration, much less of the Dissolution of it. But yet, notwithstanding all this, we see nothing is so common among all the Prophets, as the Predictions of the *Call of the Gentiles*, and those other Events which ensued upon it. This is the constant Theme of all the Prophets, down from *Moses* to *Malachi*. *I will move them to Jealousy with those that are not a People, and will provoke them to Anger with a foolish Nation*, says God, *Deut. xxxii. 21.* That is, the *Jews* shall after a time be no longer God's peculiar Favourites; and that formerly beloved Nation, shall with Envy and Grief behold Nations, which God heretofore seemed to slight, taken into his particular Love and Favour. *Time shall be*, says holy *David*, *when all the Ends of the World shall remember and turn unto the Lord; and all the Kindreds of the Nations shall worship before him*, *Psal. xxii. 27.* The whole Book of *Isaiah* is full of the Predictions of this particular Thing. *It shall come to pass* (says he) *in the last Days, that the Mountain of the Lord's House shall be established in the Top of the Mountains, and shall be exalted above the Hills, and all Nations shall flow unto it, &c.* *Isa. ii. v. 2 and 3.* *Arise, shine for thy Light is come, and the Glory of the Lord is risen upon thee; and the Gentiles shall come to thy Light, and Kings to the Brightness of thy Rising,* *Isa. lx. v. 12. 3.* *I was sought of them that asked not for me, &c.* *Isa. lxv. 1.* *Sing, O Barren, for more are the Children*

dren of the desolate than of the married Wife, saith the Lord, Isa. liv. 1. And more particularly, Chap. xix. 21. The Lord shall be known in Ægypt, and the Ægyptians shall serve the Lord. And in the 44th Chapter, God promises to give a Saviour or Messias, both to Jews and Gentiles, *To raise up the Tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a Light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my Salvation to the End of the Earth.* And in the 42d Chap. speaking of the *Messias*, God saith, *Behold my Servant whom I uphold, &c. I the Lord have called thee in Righteousness, &c. I will give thee for a Covenant of the People, for a Light of the Gentiles, to open the blind Eyes, &c.* And he ushers in this Matter, as if he was saying the most incredible Thing in the World. *Behold, new Things I declare, before they spring forth I will tell you of them, &c.* and then he says, he will bring the Blind by the way he knew not; as before, that *the Isles shall wait for God's Law*, v. 4. And so the other Prophets, *In that Day, saith the Lord, I will assemble her that halteth, &c.* Mic. iv. 5, 6. *And the Lord shall be King over all the Earth, and in that Day shall there be one Lord, and his Name one,* Zach. xiv. 8. *From the rising of the Sun, unto the going down of the same, my Name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place Incense shall be offered to my Name, and a pure Offering; for my Name shall be great among the Heathen, saith the Lord of Hosts,* Mal. i. 11. Now, I pray you, was ever any Thing more plainly predicted than the Manifestation of the true Religion to the *Gentiles*, and that by so many Men who lived in such different Ages? If they had lived at one Time, they might have been said to have complotted together; but for so many Writers, so many Ages distant from each other, all to predict the same Thing, and that so unlikely an one to come to pass, as the *Call of the Gentiles*; nay, and this thing too to happen exactly as they foretold it; this does unexceptionably shew, That it was owing only to the eternal Fore-knowledge of God, who was pleased to reveal the secret Workings of his
Provi-

Providence to the Prophets, so many Ages before it was displayed.

Phil. But it may be, this Prediction, as you call it, was only a lucky Guess which chanced to come to pass, as, once in a hundred Times, such a thing may happen.

Cred. But then how came so many different Men, at such different Times, all to light upon the same Guess? Men whose Prediction only consists in guessing, guess only at something that is probable to happen; as that there shall be Frost or Snow in *January*, and hot Weather in *July*; but no one would ever guess of walking over the *Thames* in *Summer*. Nor would it be less extravagant for a *Jew*, two thousand Years ago, to have guessed at the *Call of the Gentiles*. For how could it ever come into such an one's Head to think, That the profane Heathen Nations, which he had been taught from his Cradle to have such an Abhorrence of, many of which God Almighty had solemnly cursed, and which they were commanded, to the utmost of their Power, to destroy; to think, That these execrable Nations should ever become God's Favourites and People; or, That ever those many Countries would condescend, to receive a Religion from the *Jews*, who were so hated and despised by all the World? These were such strange Things, tho' they did really come to pass, that could never enter into any one's Thoughts, to imagine before-hand; and therefore could be revealed only by the prophetick Spirit of God.

Phil. What is your next Prediction?

Cred. Why, I think it is a remarkable Prediction of the Prophet *Haggai*, ii. 7. That Christ should come, during the second Temple. For by the second Temple the *Jews* understood the Administration of Ecclesiastical Affairs after the Captivity, and not the bare Walls of *Zerubbabel's Temple*; for tho' *Herod the Great* in his Time, rebuilt the Temple in a more splendid manner, it was counted the second Temple still, in Opposition to that more famous Oeconomy of Ecclesiastical Matters, which flourished whilst the first Temple was standing. Now

*Call of the
Gentiles no
random
Guess of
the Pro-
phets.*

*Glory of the
second
Temple,
Hag. ii. 7.
a Prophecy
of Christ.*

it was the Prediction of *Haggai*, and the general Expectation of the *Jews*, that under this second Temple the *Messias* was to come. *I will shake all Nations, and the Desire or Expectation of all Nations shall come, and I will fill this House with Glory, saith the Lord of Hosts. The Glory of this latter House shall be greater than that of the former, saith the Lord of Hosts.* And *Malachi*, who lived at the same Time with this Prophet, after the Dedication of the second Temple, prophesies to the same purpose. *The Lord whom they look for, shall suddenly come into his Temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant whom they delight in, behold he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.* Now 'tis hardly possible, that any Prophesy could be more exactly accomplished, than these are, in the Person of our blessed Saviour. *I will shake all Nations.* And what a mighty Convulsion of the Affairs of the World were there, between the penning of this Prophesy, and the Coming of Christ? How was the *Eastern* World turned upside down, by the victorious Arms of *Alexander* the Great? And such a mighty Change made in all those Nations, as was never known before? And not many Ages after, How were the *Grecian* Princes, which were his Successors, subdued to the *Roman* Empire, which either crushed them, or deposed them at its Pleasure, and the poor *Jews* forced to undergo all Hardships, which their unmerciful Conquerors would put upon them, till at last their City, and Government, were utterly destroy'd?

And the Expectation of all Nations shall come. 'Tis plain, that not only the *Jews* expected a *Messias*, but all other Nations, for a considerable time before the Coming of Christ, did expect about that Time wherein he was born, That a great Person, of an extraordinary and unknown Character, should come into the World. Something of this was supposed to be found in the *Sibylline Books*, and other Prophesies which went about; which occasioned *Virgil* to attribute them to *Pollio's Son*. * *Suetonius* says,

* *Suet. in Tito.*

Perere.

Percrebuerat Oriente toto vetus & constans Opinio, esse in fatis, ut Judea profecti rerum potirentur. There was frequent, over the whole East, an old and constant Opinion, That the Fates had decreed, that some Coming out of Judea should govern the World. And Tacitus the like. Pluribus persuasio inerat, antiquis Sacerdotum Libris contineri, eo ipso tempore fore, ut valesceret Oriens, profectis; Judea rerum potirentur. A great many were persuaded, that it was contained in the ancient Books of the Priests; That at that particular Time the East should prevail, and That some coming out of Judea should govern the World. Is not this a very clear Prophesy of that then prevailing Opinion? If you were able to give any tolerable Account of this Opinion's obtaining in that Age; yet how should Haggai, who lived so many hundred Years before, come to know it, and to speak so clearly of it? If you say this was the general Opinion in Haggai's Time too, it makes the Prophesy more ancient still, and is a firmer Proof of our Saviour's being the *Messias*; because, upon this Supposition, from all Time out of Mind, the Jews expected the *Messias* to come into the World, just at the Time when Christ did come.

Again, *I will fill this House with Glory, and the Glory of this latter House shall be greater than that of the former.* What tolerable Sense can be put upon these Words, besides the Coming of the *Messias*? As to the Structure and Utensils, and all other Matters relating to it, it was a poor insignificant Thing to the first Temple; so that you can't take this to be the Meaning of the Prophet, unless you will make him contradict himself within two or three Lines; for v. 3d of this Chapter, he says, *Who is left among you, that saw this House in her first Glory? And how do you see it now? Is it not in your Eyes, in comparison of it, as nothing?* Nay, all the miraculous Powers and Dispensations, which rendred the first Temple so glorious, were all wanting in the second, as the Jews themselves own; the *Urim* and *Thummim*, the *Ark*, the *Oyl of Unction*, the *Schecinah*, &c. Now what was there in the second Temple, that would make amends for all these Defects?

Defects? What was there therein, that could, with any Propriety, be said to exceed the Glory of the first, but only the Coming of the *Messias*? But it might be very justly spoken of him; who was the Prince and Lord of Glory, who manifested his Glory to us, and we beheld it as the Glory of the only begotten Son of God, and who has laid up for us an eternal Weight of Glory. From this and other Prophesies, it was the general Opinion of the Jews, that about the latter End of the second Temple the *Messias* should come *; now because about the latter End of that Temple, no Body, besides our Saviour, had any tolerable Pretence to be the *Messias*, therefore our Saviour is the *Messias*. This Argument is so plain and home upon the Jews, who by their Prophesies did always expect the *Messias* under the second Temple; that they are forced to make use of this silly Subterfuge to evade it, viz. That the very Day, wherein the Temple of Jerusalem was destroyed, the *Messias* was born. As appears by that of R. Samuel in Berisith Rabba, *How do you prove that the Messias was born in the same Day, the House of the Sanctuary was destroy'd?* Because it is said in the 66th Chapter of *Isaiah*, *Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her Pain came, she was delivered of a Male-Child.*

And when they are urged upon this, that no other *Messias*, but that of the Christians, appears to have been born in the World about that Time; they are forced to say, That he stays at Rome among the Leprous there. As is plain by the Book *Sanedrin*, *When appeared the Messiah? Go and ask him: Where does he make his Stay? In the Gate of Rome. What is his Sign? He sits among the Poor and Infirm,* (i. e.) *the Lepers, according to that of the 53d of Isaiah, He was wounded for our Offences, and bore our Infirmitiess, and we reputed him a Leper. The Lepers open one Wound, and bind up another, and so does the Messias; nor will he do otherwise, lest he should be brought back.*

* Vid. Galatinum. lib. 4. c. 11.

"Tis plain therefore, That the *Jews* are fully convinced, that the *Messias* was to come about the Time our Saviour did, before the Destruction of the second Temple, according as these Prophesies did foretell; and therefore not being able to deny the Meaning of the Prophecies, they are forced to be at the Expence of a ridiculous Lie, about an unknown *Messias*, which no Body ever heard of but out of the *Talmud*. If they had been able to have said any Thing else against these Predictions, they would; for 'tis plain, it must be the last Refuge they could fly too, to stop the Mouths of Christians, to take up this foolish and groundless Fiction to support their sinking Cause.

Phil. I see you are a very warm Advocate for the Prophecies. What prophetick Confirmation of your Faith comes next in Order?

The 52d
and 53d
Chapter of
Isaiah, a
Prophecy of
Christ.

Cred. Why I think the 52d and 53d Chapter of *Isaiah*, to be a very plain and unexceptionable Prophecy of our Saviour, and which has been most exactly accomplished, in him. *Behold my Servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted, &c.* *Isa.* lli. 13. Which is the beginning of the Prophecy, and which *Jonathan Paraphrases* thus, *Behold, my Servant the Messias shall be prospered, exalted and multiplied, and greatly fortified.* And so other ancient *Rabbins* did explain the same of the *Messias*, as is to be seen in those ancient Pieces *Tanchuma* and *Siphre*, whose Fragments *R. Simeon*, the Author of the Book *Falcut*, has collected, and in the Book *Pesikta*; and among the * Moderns in *R. Moses Alshech*, &c. *And note, that the Explication of Tanchuma*, upon the 13th Verse is very remarkable. *Behold my Servant shall be exalted, &c. This is King Messias, he shall be greatly advanced, he shall be advanced above Abraham, above Moses, above the Angels of the Ministry.* And all along after, there is such a plain Description of the Exinanition, the Glorification, and the Satisfaction of Christ, that if it was to be wrote since his Appearance in the World, it could hardly be more exact. Of whom,

* *Hulsi Theol. Jud.* p. 318.

besides our blessed Saviour, could it be thought such an incredible Thing, to be born, and to suffer Afflictions; As the Prophet thinks it to be, when he ushers in this Prophecy with a *Who hath believed our Report?* Chap. lii. v. 1. But it was very wonderful to have such a Prediction given of the *Messias*, whom the *Jews* generally had the most glorious Conceptions of. 'Twas very startling to them to hear, That He *should grow up like a tender Plant out of a dry Ground*; That He should have *no Form nor Comeliness*; That He should be *despised and rejected of Men*; a *Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief*, ver. 2, 3. Who, besides our blessed Saviour, could be said to have *born our Griefs, and carried our Sorrows, to be wounded for our Transgressions, and bruised for our Iniquities*; and that *by His Stripes we are healed*? Who besides Him had no *Deceit in his Mouth*? He *was brought as a Lamb to the Slaughter*; and as a Sheep before the Shearer is dumb, so he opened not his Mouth; whilst all we, like Sheep, have gone astray, and have turned every one to his own Way, and the Lord hath laid on Him the *Iniquity of us all*.

This is so plain a Prediction of our blessed Lord, that the *Jews* have little or nothing to object against it; and *Hulsius* says, that he has been told by several *Jews*, That they could deal well enough with the Predictions of the other Prophets, which are applied to Christ, if *Isaiah* would but hold his Tongue. And *Helvicius* reports, That many *Jews* have been converted to Christianity by reading this Prophecy *, and among others, *Johannes Isaacus Levita*, as he himself confesses in his *Defensio Veritatis Hebraicae*. And therefore I am very sorry to find *Grotius* so far complying with the *Jews*, as to come in with this pitiful Explication of this noble Prophecy, *Prius congruent ha Notæ in Jeremiam, potius sublimiusqne in Christum!* These Marks agree first to the Prophet Jeremiah, and in a better and sublimer Sense to Christ. For there is no Manner of Ground for any one to surmise, that the Prophet ever thought a Word of *Jeremiah*, when he indited this

* In Append. Elench. Jud.

Prophesy. Or how can any one think, that *Isaiah* should say so many great and wonderful Things of a Prophet, who was, in all Respects, inferior to himself? What was there so stupendous in the Birth of *Jeremiah*, as should make *Isaiah* cry out here, *Who shall declare his Generation?* This can agree only to the eternal Generation of our blessed Lord. How are we healed by *Jeremiah's* Stripes? And what Prophet was ever made a vicarious Punishment, for the Sins of the People?

Nor will the Exposition of some other modern *Jews*, who apply this Prophesy to the Jewish Nation, be of more Validity. For how should the Prophet ever come to describe that refractory People, who were always so stubborn under their Afflictions, by a *Lamb that openeth not his Mouth?* When that Nation was so often reproved by the Prophets, for their enormous Sins. How could they be said to have done no Violence, neither to have any Deceit in their Mouth? How could the *Jews*, who were God's People, be said to be stricken for the Transgressions of God's People? This is to make the same *Jews* to be both Innocent and Transgressors, to suffer and not to suffer at the same Time; which is such horrible Non-sense, as is not to be endured.

Phil. I confess I am more puzzled with this Chapter, than any other Place I know of; and when I am more at Leisure, I will give it a more attentive Consideration than I have hitherto done. And now, Sir, will you be pleased to proceed to some other Prediction.

The Monarchies
and Weeks
in Daniel's
Prophecies
of Christ.

Cred. Next, Sir, I desire you would reflect upon that wonderful Prophesy contained in the II. VII. VIII. and IX. Chapters of *Daniel*. I pray you attentively to consider, how evidently he sets forth the four great Monarchies of the World: First, By the Interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's Dream, Chap. II. And then again, By the Representation of the four great Beasts, Chap. VII. and VIII. How should it ever enter into *Daniel's* Thoughts, unless assisted by the fore-knowing Spirit of God, that the Kingdom of *Persia* should be destroyed by *Alexander the Great*, or the King of *Grecia*, as it is



plainly

plainly set down, *Dan.* viii. 21? Or that, upon the first King of Grecia's Death, several Kingdoms should arise out of his Conquests? v. 21. What should move him to say, That in the latter Time of their Kingdom (i. e. of the Grecian Monarchy) when the Transgressors are come to the full, a King of fierce Countenance, and understanding dark Sentences, shall stand up; and his Power shall be mighty, but not by his own Power, and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper and practice, and shall destroy the mighty, and the holy People. And through his Policy he shall cause Craft to prosper in his Hand, and he shall magnify himself in his Heart, and by Peace shall destroy many; he shall stand up against the Prince of Princes, but he shall be broken without Hand, &c. *Dan.* viii. 23. Which is a perfect Description of the Power, the Pride, and Craft of King *Antiochus*, one of the *Selencidae*; as also of his unmerciful Cruelty to the holy People, or the *Jews*, and of his remarkable Death, as you may find them recorded in the Books of the *Maccabees*, and in *Josephus*. But this is not all; for after the Prophet has been foretelling of the Successions of these four earthly Monarchies, he begins to tell of the heavenly or spiritual Kingdom of Christ. And in the Days of these Kings shall the God of Heaven set up a Kingdom, which shall never be destroyed, and the Kingdom shall not be left to other People, but it shall break in Pieces, and consume all these Kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest, that the Stone was cut out of the Mountain without Hands, and that it brake in Pieces the Iron, the Clay, the Bræs, &c. *Dan.* ii. 44. And when in the VII Chap. he speaks of the same Monarchies under the Representation of Beasts, he says: As concerning the rest of the Beasts they had their Dominion taken away, yet their Lives were prolonged for a Season and a Time. I saw in the Night Visions, and behold one like the Son of Man came with the Clouds of Heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him: And there was given him Dominion, and Glory, and a Kingdom, that all People, Nations, and Languages should serve him: His Dominion is an everlasting Dominion, which shall not pass away, and his

A CONFERENCE

Kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. And again, *The Saints of the most High shall take the Kingdom, and possess the Kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.* Now what greater Evidence can be required of the Truth of the *Christian Religion*, then that so many hundred Years before, it should be predicted, That, in the Time of the fourth of these great Monarchies, or the *Roman Empire*, the Kingdom of the *Son of Man*, or Jesus Christ, should be established, which should continue for ever? It is very wonderful that *Daniel*, who lived in so early an Age, should foretell, so exactly, not only the Dissolution of the great Empire he then lived under, but of several others that succeeded upon it; and should give such a particular Description of King *Antiochus*, and his barbarous Usage of the *Jews*, as looks more like a History than a Prophesy. But it improves our Faith to a Sort of Demonstration, to find this holy Prophet, so many Ages before, foretelling the Success of the *Christian Religion*, and the Kingdom of Christ enduring for ever. If we suppose, with you *Deists*, that all this was a rambling Guess; yet how could *Daniel* guess at a thing which he cannot be supposed to have thought of? One could hardly suppose that a Man, who lived under the Power and Grandeur of one of the *Eastern Monarchies*, could ever think it should be destroyed by a King of *Grecia*, a poor inconsiderable Spot of Ground in respect of their vast Dominions, and, at the Time when *Daniel* lived, very little known at *Babylon*? But it is inconceivable, how it should enter into *Daniel's Thoughts*, to talk of a spiritual Kingdom of Saints, or good Men; and this at a Time, when the Minds of the *Jews* were set only upon a temporal Kingdom, upon returning Home again, and being victorious and glorious in their own Country. How came he to guess that there should be a Person called the *Son of Man*, that this Person should have Dominion and Glory given him by God? That this Person was to have a Kingdom, and that Kingdom to be of Saints, and those Saints of all Nations and Languages, and their Kingdom to continue to the End of the World too? After this

Rate, one may write a History, as well as a Prophesy, by Guess. In short, the great *Porphyry* was so confounded by the surprizing Exactness of this Prophesy, in relation to the four Monarchies, and the Cruelties of *Antiochus*, that he was forced to assert, That the Author of the Book of *Daniel* lived after *Antiochus's* Time. And I wonder why some of you *Deists* (to tread in your Master's Steps) don't as well assert, that he lived since *Constantine*, when the Empire became Christian : For the Prophesy is altogether as exact, about the Kingdom of Christ, as about either of the Monarchies. Nay, if we were at this Day to contrive an hieroglyphical Description of the Prevalency of Christ's Kingdom over the Powers of this World, and the Fall of the Pagan Empires by the Progress of Christianity ; how could one better express it, than by *Daniel's Stone cut out of the Mountain without Hands*, which *broke in Pieces the Images*, which represented the four Empires ? What could be more strong and powerful, than those vast Monarchies ? And yet the strongest of them, viz. that of *Rome*, that had subdued and proudly stood upon the Ruins of all the rest, and laid out all its Force, and Power, and Policy, against the Christian Religion, was never able to prevail against it. For, notwithstanding this, *This Stone cut out of the Mountain without Hands*, the Religion of Christ that was founded upon no human Art nor Policy, a plain Institution, without any artificial Finery, propagated only by a few unlearned Fishermen, assisted by the Power of God, destroyed all the Pagan Worship throughout the *Roman Empire*, brake down their Images, demolished their Temples, and banished their Gods, and never ceased till it had perfectly broken in Pieces this great and gaudy Image, and had substituted, in lieu of it, the spiritual Kingdom of Christ, which must endure to the End of the World.

This is a wonderful Prediction, and the more we consider it, the more we must admire it ; and that also which follows concerning the Time of the Death of the *Messias*, is not only the Subject of our Admiration, but likewise

a great Confirmation of our Faith. After threescore and two Weeks, the Messias shall be cut off, but not for himself; and the People of the Prince that shall come, shall destroy the City and the Sanctuary, and the End thereof shall be with a Flood, and unto the end of the War Desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the Covenant with many for one Week, and in the midst of the Week he shall cause the Sacrifice and the Oblation to cease; and, for the over-spreading of Abominations, he shall make it desolate, even until the Consummation, and that determined shall be poured out upon the Desolate, Dan. ix. 26, 27. Now if by these 62 Weeks, and the 7 mentioned before, which make up in all 69 Weeks, (fully to be compleat before the great 70th Week, v. 24. wherein these remarkable Things are to happen) I say, if by these we are to understand Weeks of Years, as it must in some Places of Scripture *, that is, 69 times 7 Years, or 474 Years, reckoning from the Time of this Prophecy to the preaching of Christ, the Time will come very near to the Account of our ordinary Chronology; and, perhaps, if the Reigns of the Persian Kings, and some other Particulars in History, were well adjusted, this prophetical Computation would exactly agree even with the Time of Christ's Death. But it has pleased the wise Providence of God, to suffer these Matters to lie in some Manner of Confusion, that our Faith might be founded upon a nobler Principle than that of Chronological Niceties: But yet the Prophecy, if attentively considered, carries as much Weight with it, as if it agreed with the Chronological Tables to a day. Here are predicted so many of the principal Actions in the Life of Christ, as to their exact Time, and other Particularities, that, after all the Subterfuges and Shifts which can be made, they can be attributed only to the all-knowing Spirit of God, that, so many Ages before, revealed them to this Prophet.

* Vid. Ez. Cap. iv. Rev. xii. 6. xiii. 5. and particularly, Gen. xxix. 27. Fulfil her Weeks, (i. e.) her Seven Years, Levit. xxix. 27. Thou shalt number Seven Sabbaths, or Weeks, of Years unto thee.

How came *Daniel* to tell, that about 490 Years after the Edict to rebuild *Jerusalem*, one should lay Claim to be the *Messias*? I grant it is very difficult, and has puzzled the Heads of Chronologers, to bring exactly these *Weeks*, and the Time of Christ's Suffering together, because of the different Accounts of the Length of Kings Reigns, given by diverse Historians, and the different Ways in reckoning the Beginnings, and Extent of Years in several Nations; yet, I say, granting all this, How should *Daniel* pitch upon the Time of the *Messias*, so near as he doth, to the Preaching or Suffering of Jesus Christ, upon any Computation whatsoever? Ten, or a Dozen Years, is no great Matter here. You may think 'twas by Chance, but this must be a very strange Chance, and much harder to be believed, than that *Daniel* had the Spirit of Prophesy. It is a good deal above two thousand Years ago, since *Daniel* lived; and if his Prophesy was owing to Chance, he might as well have conjectured the *Messias* to come, in any other Part of this long Time between the Date of his Prophesy and us, or any other Part of Time which the World shall last beyond us; he might have made him come long before, or after our Saviour; but to nick in his prophetic Conjecture, just with the Time of Jesus Christ; and so luckily to appoint the Time of the *Messias*'s coming, when our Saviour lived, who not only laid Claim to the Office of the *Messias*, but has been owned as such by so many Myriads of Men, by such a Number of Nations, and throughout so many successive Ages; I say, for a Man, so many hundred Years before, to say, that the *Messias* should come just about the Time of the famous JESUS CHRIST, who has been so generally reputed the *Messias*, is a thing hardly within the Power of Chance; and, by all considering Men, must be attributed to the Prediction of God's Holy Spirit.

But the Prophet does not only fortell the precise Time, when the *Messias* should come, but says something of him, which, at that Time, it could have entred into

no one's Head to have suspected, That the *Messias* should be slain, or, as it is in the Hebrew Phrase, shall be cut off*. 'Tis plain, by this Prophesy, that the *Messias*, who was to come into the World about this Time, was to die too. Nay, the unbelieving *Jews* themselves make this Prophesy yet clearer of our Saviour, when they say, The *Messias* shall not only suffer, but shall be killed by the *Jews*. The Words of *Rabbi Simeon*, the Son of *Johai*, in the Book *Mekkar-hassodoth*, are very remarkable. For there *Hosea* is brought in weeping, and saying, *Wo to those wicked unrighteous Murderers of Israel, for the Love of whom God shall send his own holy Son, having put on human Flesh, that he may forgive them their Sins. Wo to them; for by their wicked Actions, they shall be rebellious to the Messias, neither shall they regard the Words of him, who shall command them to be purified with the Water of Purification, to expiate their Sins; but they shall not walk in Ways acceptable to God, but, being enraged by a mighty Anger, he shall kill him.*

Nay farther, this Prophesy foretells the Satisfaction of Christ; That Christ should die for the Sins of the World; That he should be cut off, and not for himself. This could be owing to no fanciful Opinion of the *Jews*; for if it had its Foundation from their fond Conjectures only, they would not have guessed him to have come into the World with this Character of dying for their Sins, but to have made his Entry, like a triumphing Monarch, treading upon the Necks of their Enemies, freeing them from their forlorn Captivity, and bringing their Masters into the same Subjection, which they groaned under.

This Prophesy doth moreover predict, That after the *Messias's* Death, the City *Jerusalem*, then lately rebuilt by *Cyrus's* Decree, should, at the End of the seventy Weeks, together with the *Sanctuary*, be destroyed with a *Flood*, or impetuous Torrent of Desolation; when the

* *Iccareth shall be cut off*, signifies, shall be slain, Gen. ix. 11. *Ezek. xxi. 3.* *1 Kings xviii. 13.*

Sacrifices and Oblations should for ever cease. How can all these Predictions be attributed to any thing, but to the Spirit of God? Was it possible, for Mankind to have foreseen any of these Contingencies? Suppose, that *Daniel*, being conversant in the Intreigues of the *Persian Court*, could possibly have foreseen, that the Edict of *Cyrus* would come out, for the building of *Jerusalem*, yet how could he foresee, that it should last but 490 Years after it? This was a little too much, for any Politician to pretend to. Or, suppose, that *Daniel* here had a Mind to give out an unintelligible and obscure Prediction, only to puzzle the *Jews*, and that some Part of it has chanced to come to pass. But, I pray then, How comes *Daniel* to be so particular, in his Prophesy? Such Kind of Prognosticators love to talk as much, as they can, in the Clouds; they apply their Discourse only to general Matters, as Wars, Seditions, and Plots, &c. which happen almost every Day; but they have a great Care of Particulars, as being too many to be guessed at, and, if one of them should unluckily fall out wrong, the Credit of the Predictor would be ruined. Therefore no one can imagine, that *Daniel*, or any other Man of ordinary Sense, should venture upon contriving a sham Prophesy, with so many Particularities in it, and those too so unusual ones, and so out of the Road of the common Hit of Accidents, that it was ten thousand to one, if any of them ever came to pass. There was a great Deal of Contingency in the rebuilding of the City and the Temple of *Jerusalem*, after the Captivity; and there was a great Deal more in their being destroyed again 490 Years after that; but there was a thousand to one more odds, that the Inhabitants should not have the ordinary Fortune of other conquered People, in a While to rebuild their City again, and that their Temple should be forced to be for ever *desolate to the Consummation*, or End of the World. These are such a hardy sort of Conjectures, that the silliest Prognosticator (much less a Court Politician, as *Daniel* was) would not have ventured upon. It remains therefore, that so many different Events, so long before,

and so particularly foretold, must be owing to the divine Power, which designed them, as a previous Light to Mankind, to give them a View of the Redemption by the *Messias* before-hand ; and to be a lasting Evidence of the Truth of Christianity, which, so many Ages before, was so clearly predicted. Do but seriously read over this Prophesy, and consider the Time when the City was to be destroyed, and that too with a Flood and Torrent of Desolation ; that it was never to be built again ; but that the Sacrifices and Oblations thereof, should for ever cease : And read the sad Story of this in *Josephus* ; that bloody War, the lamentable Desolation, and the dreadful Famine, Seditions, and Murders, which accompanied it ; the Fire from Heaven, which burnt their Temples, notwithstanding all Endeavours to the contrary ; and, after the rasing of the City, such a Dispersion of the People, as disabled them ever to return again : I say, if you seriously read and consider this, you must needs own, that this Prediction came from God, to whom the Circumstances of future Ages are only known.

But there is one Particular more in this Prophesy, which I forgot to mention ; and yet it is so remarkable, that I cannot pass it by. It is here said of the *Messias*, that *He shall confirm the Covenant with many for a Week*, and that *in the midst of the Week, he shall cause the Sacrifice and the Oblation to cease*. Which was most exactly fulfilled by our blessed *Saviour*, who by preaching the *Gospel*, for half one of these Weeks, or about three Years and a half, *confirmed the New Covenant with many*, instituted the Christian Religion, which was to save the Souls not only of the *Jews*, but of all other, or *many Nations* ; and, in the middle of the Week, submitted to the Death of the Cross, which abrogated all the old Sacrifices and Oblations, which were only Types of this *one* great Sacrifice for the Sins of the whole World.

Now to take all this together, one would think, that all these Particulars, so exactly mentioned, look more like an History than a Prophesy ; and 'tis a Wonder, confide-

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ring the Plainness of it, that the Unbelievers don't pretend it was wrote since Christ came into the World.

Phil. I confess, *Credentius*, there is something in this, which a little shocks me at present, and which I cannot get over now; but hereafter, when I have Leisure, I will give it a more attentive Consideration, and weigh it impartially: And therefore, in the mean time, if you have any thing farther to urge upon this Head, I pray go on.

Cred. I will trouble you but with one Argument more, and that is the remarkable Prediction of the Place of Christ's Birth, foretelling, That he should be born at *Beth-lehem*, *Micah* the 5th Chap. ver. 2. *But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the Thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall come forth unto me, he that is to be a Ruler in Israel; whose Goings forth have been from of Old, from Everlasting.* That this Prophesy was understood, by the Jews of old, as a Prediction of the *Messias*, is plain from *Mat.* ii. 4, 5. *And when Herod had gathered all the chief Priests and Scribes of the People together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Beth-lehem of Judah: For thus it is written by the Prophet; And thou Beth-lehem, &c.* And it is plain likewise, from the Writings of the Jews themselves, That some of them allowed, that the *Messias* was to be born at *Beth-lehem*, *Jonathan*, the *Targumist*, upon these Words of *Micah*, makes *Beth-lehem* to speak thus: *From my Part the Messias shall come out.* And *R. Solomon Jarchi* says the same: *And thou Beth-lehem hast deserved to be least of the Families of Judah, because of the Prophanation of Ruth, the Moabitish, with thee; nevertheless, the Messias, the Son of David, shall go out of thee, as it is written, Psal. cxviii. 22. The Stone which the Builders refused, is become the Head Stone of the Corner.* 'Tis plain therefore, it was the Expectation of the Jews, that the *Messias* was to be born at *Beth-lehem*, from this Prophesy; and 'tis plain, that *Jesus Christ* was born there, and therefore he has another undeniable Mark that He is the *Messias*. *Grotius*, indeed, has endeavoured to prove, that
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the Person here primarily intended, is *Zerubbabel*, being back'd with the Authority of St. *Chrysostom*. But **Theodore* has sufficiently confuted this Fancy, and proved that *Zerubbabel* was born at *Babylon*. To this *Grotius* replies, (with an Answer borrowed from *Kimchi*) that *Zerubbabel* was descended from *David*, who was born at *Beth-lehem*. But then what Reason can be given, why *Zerubbabel* should be said to come from *Beth-lehem*, rather than from any other Town, where any of his Predecessors were born? Why might not he be said, as well, to come out of *Egypt*, where *Aminadab* and *Naasson* were born; or out of *Jerusalem*, where so many of the preceeding Kings had their Nativity; out of *Haran* of *Mesopotamia* where *Juda*, or out of *Ur* of the *Chaldees*, where *Abraham* was born? So that upon this Account, *Zerubbabel* must have had as many Places of Nativity, as he had Progenitors; and why *Beth-lehem* only should be mentioned, is very unaccountable; upon *Grotius's* own Supposition. But to pass over this; To whom, but the *Messias* can be attributed this Character, *Whose Goings forth have been from old, from Everlasting*; which does plainly express the eternal Generation of the *Son* by the *Father*? Nor is this a fanciful Exposition of Christians, who have been accustomed to the Doctrine of the Trinity; but an ancient Author in the *Talmud* of *Hierusalem*, explains this of the Generation of the *Messias*, which he says is, *As a Dew from the Lord, and as Drops upon the Herb, which does not expect a Man.*

Now to take all these Prophesies together, and seriously to consider the obvious Sense of the Words, and the Interpretation which the *Jews* constantly put upon them in ancient Times, before they were prejudiced by their Hatred to the Christian Religion, to fly from their old Explications, which they saw did so plainly favour us; we cannot but think, that our Saviour was manifestly pointed forth by these Predictions; so that nothing but Men's corrupt Affections, or their Prejudices, can hind-

* *Theod.* in *Mic.* v. 2.

der them from owning him to be the true *Messias*, which was so predicted. All the Offices of his Mediatorship are so plainly foretold; the Time of his Appearance so exactly calculated beforehand; and the whole World was in such an Expectation of him; the Nature of his Kingdom so plainly described; the Time and Manner of his Death is so particularly laid down, with all the dreadful Calamities which were to beset the *Jews* upon it; almost every single Action of his Life is, either by Type or Prophecy, so clearly predicted; the Calamities of his Life, and the Benefits of his Death, the eternal Generation of his Godhead, his immaculate Conception, nay, the very Place and Manner of his Birth so historically, almost, set down; that we cannot but adore the Almighty Goodness of God, that he is pleased to make our Faith so easy to us, which he has promised so liberally to reward us for.

Phil. Pray, Sir, don't talk so much of the Easiness of Faith in this Matter; for make the best of these Things, they are all dark mysterious Riddles. If God Almighty had a Mind to have given Mankind a previous Knowledge of the Coming of Jesus Christ, he would have dealt very plainly with them, and not have wrapt it up in obscure enigmatical Veils, like the Heathen Oracles, and have left Men only blindly to guess at them; he would have set them down in Words at Length, and not in mystical Figures; he would downright have told us, That, in such a Year of *Augustus's* or *Herod's* Reign, Christ would be born; that such a perfidious Wretch, as *Judas*, by Name, would in such a Year have betray'd him; That the *Sanedrim* of the *Jews* would have plotted his Death; and That God would, after so many Years, be revenged upon that People for their barbarous Usage of him, by the final Destruction of their City. This would have been more agreeable to the Simplicity and Veracity of God, than to have made use of such dark Oracles, which, like waxen Noses, may be turned any Way a Man pleases.

*Reason why
Prophecies
are some-
thing ob-
scure.*

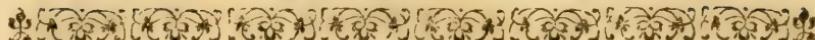
Cred. Not too fast, good *Philologus*. God Almighty designed Faith to be a Virtue, to depend in great Measure upon the Determination of a rightly disposed Will; and not to be the necessary Result of our Intellects. The *Divine Wisdom* does not think fit to make us Believers, whether we will or no ; or, by a compulsive Evidence of Truth, force us to assent to these Predictions (or the other Subjects of Revelation) as necessarily as we must do to such a Proposition as this, that *Two and Two make Four*. Our Salvation is to be attained by a reasonable Faith, which no good and considering Man has just Grounds to except against. But it cannot be expected, that our Religion should be all Mathematical Demonstration. We our selves are obliged to *Work out* our *Salvation with Fear and Trembling*, and must not think, that God ought to make us go to Heaven, by the same Laws of Necessity, as the Sparks fly upwards. For where would be the Virtue of Believing, when a Man could not help it ? There is a great deal of true Piety shewn, in believing and relying upon God's Promises; in searching, and comparing the Scriptures; and in a diligent Study, and Application, to understand God's Will ; but one is never the better Man, for assenting to a Proposition in *Euclid*.

But this is not all. It is highly agreeable to the *Wisdom of God* in governing the World, That these Prophecies should have such a Degree of Obscurity in them, that they should not, before-hand, be understood in all their Particulars: Because that would be an Obstruction, to many of the other great Designs of God's Providence, and would put him upon unusual Methods to bring them about, either by suspending the Freedom of Man's Will, or violently over-turning the Power of Nature to effect them. Suppose, that God had particularly predicted, That, upon the 25th Day of *December*, in such a Year of *Augustus* his Empire, at the Town of *Beth-lehem*, Christ should be born; and then see, what would naturally happen upon it. The *Jews* would have come all in Crowds, to have welcomed this *heavenly Infant* into

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the World; every one would have been officious to pay their Respects, and to offer Presents to him; they would have carried him about, continually, in triumphant Chariots; and would have *bosanna'd* him, from his coming into the World, to his going out. But then there would be one great Thing omitted, which our Saviour came into the World to teach, that is, *Humility*; which he could not have effectually recommended to Mankind, but only by his living under such a State of *Poverty*. Or supposing *Judas's* Name had stood in capital Letters, in several Places of the *Old Testament*; and all his traitorous Disimulation had been so perfectly described, that *Judas* himself might have seen his own black Picture, there; and what now would have been the Event of this? Why, *Judas* would have been so shy of the Temptation, that it would not have been in the Power of the *Jews*, or of the Devil either, to have made him embrace it; and thirty Pieces of Silver would have been so far, from enticing him to that Infidelity, that as many Talents of Gold would not have done it. So that God Almighty must have been forced, to have over-powered his Will, or to have altered the Method of his own Designs, to have fulfilled such an exact Prediction. Therefore I conclude, That it shews the great Wisdom of God, in composing these Prophesies just as they are; to shew before-hand, plain enough, the general Designs of his Providence, and to leave the Particulars of them to be manifest only, after the Event; by this prudently contriving, That, till the Coming of Christ, God's People might have a sufficient Hope and comfortable Expectation of Him, and that the Rules of Nature, and the divine Justice, might not be unhinged, by his coming.





Of the Lives and Actions of Christ and the Apostles, as they are Recorded in Scripture.

Phil. You must excuse me, *Credentius*, if, what I am now about to urge, be ungrateful to you, I designing in my Objections to take to Pieces the Lives and Actions of those *Persons*, whom you have the greatest Veneration for ; and to shew *them* to have been Men of that Complexion, as very little to deserve that high Esteem, you are wont to pay to *their* Characters. I will promise you, for Civility sake, not to make such Sport with these *Persons* before you, as we, of our Persuasion, do among our selves ; but I have some Things to urge upon this Head, which, spoken ever so tenderly, may give Offence to Persons of your Persuasion.

To begin with *Jesus Christ*, the Author of your Sect. 'Tis a Part of your Religion to believe that he was the Son of God, and born of a Virgin ; and yet at the same Time, you don't believe a Tittle of the Stories of *Aeneas*'s being born of *Anchises* and *Venus*, or of *Romulus*'s being born of *Mars* and *Rhea Sylvia* ; but look upon these only as specious Tales, to cover over shameful Amours*. But where is the Difference in these Cases ? The Scripture it self owns, that *Joseph* himself was a little suspicious of some foul Play in this Matter, when he determined to put his espoused Wife away privately, *Mat.* i. 19. But a Man of Sense †, who has examined these Matters long ago, has sifted out the very Name of a Soldier, called *Panthera*, and tells a very broad Story of him and you know who.

*The Birth
of Christ
vindicated.*

Cred. Good God ! That ever our blessed Saviour should bestow such an inestimable Benefit upon Mankind, as to be *Born*, and to *Die* for their Sins ; and that there should be any found among them, which should make such ungrateful Returns, as to load him with the

* Julian apud Cyrill. lib. 8. † Celsus in Origine lib. i.

most abusive Blasphemy ! I find, *Philologus*, you are very hard to believe any Thing in Scripture-History ; and yet every malicious Lie, though ever so silly, out of *Julian* or *Celsus*, can go down with you.

You think, you are wondrous happy in your Comparison, between the Birth of Christ, and that of some of the old Heroes ; but there is a very wide Difference in all the Circumstances of these, if what you say, as to the Birth of those Persons, be true. But it is not to be allowed you, that all those famous Men in early Times, who attributed their Original to a Deity, were of a spurious Birth. For the Reason why they claimed such a Parentage was, not to hide the Shame of their Mother, (as you would have it) but to give themselves a greater Character to their Subjects or Enemies, and to make People fall in more readily with their ambitious Designs, as is clear in the Expeditions of *Bacchus* and *Hercules*. And, after them, other Princes, who had a Mind to make an extraordinary Figure among their Neighbours, pretended to the like divine Birth, though their Mothers were ever so chaste ; as is evident, in the History of *Alexander* the Great. But what signify these old idle poetical Stories, to a plain Matter of Fact in a learned and knowing Age of the World ? The Stories of *Hercules*, and *Bacchus*, *Aeneas*, &c. are all assigned to dark Ages, very little of the History of which is known ; and those Things, in the Mythological Account of those Times, which we suppose to be true, may, for ought we know, be only the Figments of poetical Brains ; and the Poets might coin those celebrated Amours of the Gods, only as fine Stories, to entertain their Readers, without any Foundation at all in History for it. But the History of Christ's Birth is laid in a Time, when Things might be better examined, and such sham Stories could not be made to pass upon the World. The Reigns of *Cecrops*, or *Agamemnon*, were proper Times to deify Strumpets, and to take any Father out of Heaven, which a Man pleased ; but no Body could be so silly, as to go about to practise these Tricks, under the Empire of *Augustus*. Besides, it was

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not a Fashion, among the *Jews*, to pretend to this celestial Pedigree ; all this simple Usage was owing to the Pothytheism, or Idolatry, of the *Gentiles*, and their gross Notions of the divine Nature. Any one might very well pretend to be Son to a God, when 'twas generally thought, that Gods got Children like Men : And a Man might reasonably suppose, he might cover the Infamy of an illegitimate Birth, by Fathering himself upon a God, when the very *Theology* of their Religion informed Men, how frequently their Gods lay with their Worshiper's Wives. But the *Jews* had such just and rational Ideas of God Almighty, and so very true Notions of his Goodness and Purity, that it could enter into no Man's Head, who was educated in their Principles, to borrow the Name of God Almighty, to be an Umbrage to such Wickedness ; nay, such a Pretence would have been abhorred, and abominated, by all that Nation, as soon as they should have heard of it. The Reason, why these ancient Heroes arrogated to themselves a divine Original, was, to gain a remarkable Honour and Glory to themselves, which was the Idol of their Affections ; but our blessed Saviour despised all those Things, He forbad Men to say or do any Thing, which might redound to his Fame, and made his whole Life a most wonderful Example of Mortification and Humility. Therefore this odious Comparison of Christ, with these proud aspiring Heathens, is altogether as impertinent, as it is malicious and blasphemous.

The Blasphemy of Celsus and Julian confuted.

As for that diabolical Story of *Panthera*, which *Celsus* tells ; it is only a Jumble of some Truth, with a great Deal of malicious Falsehood, which was heretofore the usual Heathen Way of contriving their Calumnies, against the Christians. Thus they had a silly Story of the Ass's Head in *Tacitus*, or had heard something of our Saviour's riding upon an Ass ; and this gave Occasion for them, to coin their scandalous Story of the Christians worshiping the Image of Christ, with an Ass's Head and Feet, under the Name of *Onomachites*. They had some imperfect Notion, of the mystical Eating of Christ's Body and Blood, in the Sacrament ; upon which they forged that wicked

wicked Calumny of the *Thyestæ Dapes*, and their eating young Children, at their Meetings. And so their having got in their Heads something of the Name of *Panther*, or *Panthera*, gave Occasion to the Blasphemy which you just now related. It is most manifest from ancient Writers, that *Panther* was a Sir-name in the Family of Jesus Christ. *Epiphanius* says expressly *, That *Joseph* was the Son of *Jacob*, Sir-named *Panther*, and that both Father and Son were called *Panther*. And *Damascen*, treating of the Genealogy of Christ, speaks thus : From the Line of *Nathan*, the Son of *David*, *Levi* begat *Melchi* and *Panther*, and *Panther* begat him, who was sir-named *Bar-Panther*, and *Bar-Panther* begat *Joachim*, who begat the holy Mother of God †. Whence these two Authors had these Genealogies, cannot be ascertained, but 'tis probable they had them from the Books of the *Jews*. For they oftentimes very seriously, and without any Reflection, call our Saviour *Ben-Panther*, meaning no more than the Son of *Joseph* by it.

For there is a Story in the *Talmud of Jerusalem*, of a Son of *Rabbi Jose*, who being poisoned, was cured by the Name of *Jesus Ben-Pantheira*.

And there is a like Story in the *Midrash* upon the Book *Ecclesiastes* of one *Damah*, the Son of *Rabbi Eleazar*, who being bit with a Serpent, his Father would not let him be cured by one *Jacob* a Christian, by the Name of *Jesus Ben-Pantheira* ||. And the *Sanedrin*, a *Talmudical* Book, allows, that *Pandera* was the Husband of *Mary*. From all which it is very plain, that *Panther*, or *Pandeira*, was the Sir-name of *Joseph*, as it had been before of several of his Predecessors. Now the *Heathens* finding, that the supposed Father of Christ, in Scripture, was called *Joseph*; and they finding in the *Jewish Books* another Name of *Pandeira*, who was said to be Christ's Father too ; they were willing presently, to take up with the most malicious Reconciliation of this Difference, and so to make

* Epiph. Hær. 78. † Damas. de Fid. Orthod. lib. 4. cap. 15.
|| Raim. Pug. Fid. p. 289.

Joseph the supposed Father, and one *Pandeira* the true, though the adulterous one. And now you see, that this blasphemous Reflection, which you Infidels glory so much in, has no other Ground but Malice and Blunder. Besides, it is a very silly Imputation which no one, that considers Things, can believe. How can any one think that *Joseph* could be imposed upon, in a Matter of that Nature? He had Apprehension enough, 'tis plain, to resent it at first; and, unless he had been very well satisfied of the Truth of that Child's Original, he would never have put the Busines up at last. Adultery, after Matrimonial Contract, was no less than Death by the *Jewish Law*, and therefore how can we suppose, that *Joseph* should not only suffer her to live, after having committed such a Crime, but that he should take to Wife such an impure Creature. This is impossible to be thought by any one, who understands what an Abhorrence the *Jews* had to this Crime. If this malicious Reflection was true, how came the Mother of Christ to live, in any tolerable Reputation amongst her Kindred? Or how was it safe for such a Delinquent to converse, as she did, among the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, and other zealous Persons for the *Jewish Law*? If Jesus Christ had come of such an impure Birth, he would never have been suffered to have entred the Temple, whereas he frequently prayed and taught there; it being contrary to the *Mosaick Law*, for such an one to come into the Congregation, *Deut.* xxiii. 2. If there had been any Ground for this Imputation, he had by his Preaching down the Doctrines of the *Pharisees*, provoked Enemies enough to have upbraided him with it; and if they had suspected any Thing of this Kind, they would never have spared him. Indeed they object to him the Meanness of his Extract, and call him *Joseph the Carpenter's Son*; but they would have made use of a harder Reflection, if there had been any Pretence for your Suggestion. Therefore I request of you, *Philologus*, no more to make use of this Objection; which, you see, carries so much Wickedness and Silliness with it.

Phil. But by your Leave, Good Sir, for my Life, I cannot see any Thing, in the Actions of that Person you bear this great Esteem for, that is any Ways considerable; but only, by the Prejudice of Education, you see every Thing, as through a Magnifying-glass; and, when you have given the Passages of his Life an imaginary Greatness, you then stand staring, and admiring, at the Idol of your own Brain. The most, which he did, was Curing a few lame and blind Folks; and so does many a Mountebank, now-a-days, without being Deified for it*. We have had in the World many more considerable Men, which People never made such a Bustle with. What Comparison is there between the great *Romulus*, or *Numa*, and him? The one laid the Foundation of the greatest Monarchy in the World, by the Force of his Arms, and the other established it, by the best and wisest Laws. These were great and noble Genius's, and their brave Actions were worthy to be admired by all Futurity. But what worthy of Admiration can you see in one, who was remarkable for nothing but Curing of some few sick People, and Preaching about, to the Rabble, a little plain Morality.

Cred. This Argument is grounded, *Philologus*, upon Christ more so weak a Bottom, that it is not answerable to your Character, and your usual Vein of Reasoning to make use of it. For this carries with it all the Jewish Fondness in their Expectation of a temporal *Messias*, who must needs have him to be some fine gearish Thing, who was to come into the World, only to make a Blaze in it. You despise our Saviour, because he appeared in mean Circumstances, and did not make so great a Figure as *Romulus* or *Numa*. What an Argument is here! And how are Men often imposed upon, by false Notions of worldly Greatness! Pray, Sir, consider that God Almighty sent our Saviour into the World to do Good, and not to please People's Fancies. The Station in which he appear'd, was altogether as glorious in God's Sight, as that of the most pom-

Glorious
and Great
than Re-
mulus, &c.

* Julian apud Cyril. Ed. Spanh. p. 191.

pous Monarch ; for God Almighty values no more the Robes and Diadems, the noble Attendants and numerous Guards of the greatest Emperor, than he does the feathered Caps of the poor Mad-folks in *Bedlam*. We Men are apt to set a great Value upon these Things, because they agree with our carnal Affections, and are the finest Things this World affords ; but to an All-wise and All-happy God, they are all Mock-shew and Pageantry : And so they shall be to us in another World. Nothing is glorious in God's Sight, but *Piety* and *Goodness* ; and our blessed Saviour's *spotless Integrity* looked a thousand Times more splendid to his Eyes, than all the mad Ravages and costly Triumphs of conquering Princes ; or the Craft, and Designs, of politick ones. But consider, What a Deal of Mischief has been done in theWorld by these glorious Princes, these Men of Figure, you so much admire ? How many Thousands have they murthered by their Cruelty, or ambitious Designs ? How many noble Cities have been laid waste, and how many whole Countries destroyed by them ? Such a Glory, as this, is in Reality, the greatest Infamy. But if there be any Glory arising from brave and generous Actions, it is all centred in our blessed Saviour. If it be any Glory to refuse profered Honours, and to slight Fame for the meanest Obscurity ; if it be any Glory, to live a Life of the exactest Purity, without any Blemish in it ; and hardly ever to spend a Day, without doing some extraordinary charitable Act, to one or other ; if it be any Glory, to be the most universal Friend, that Mankind ever had, to rescue their Souls from eternal Death, and to teach them the wisest and noblest *Institution* that ever was, and to entail on them, for their Conformity to it, *everlasting Happiness* ; then the Character of Jesus Christ is the most glorious one that ever was ; and all the Glory of great Monarchs, which you so much admire, will be but like the shining of Pebbles to the Stars, or the dusky Blaze of Comets to the Meridian Sun. But you, forsooth, think it an undervaluing of himself, that Christ should cure poor sick People. But, by the Way, it would have been more glorious

glorious to him, to have cured chiefly the Rich. It was not the principal Design of Christ's coming into the World to cure Diseases, but to preach the Gospel ; he made use of this miraculous Power, only as a Means to prove his Divine Mission. But then, in his divine Wisdom, he took care to make use chiefly of those Miracles, which were apt to do most good. He might have contrived an hundred Ways of acting Miracles, beyond the Power of Nature, besides the curing the Blind and the Lame by a Word, which might as well have given Credit to his Doctrine ; but then they would not have been so beneficial to Mankind. He was for finding out a Way how to do good to Men's Souls and their Bodies too ; to confirm the *Religion* he taught, and also to cure their Diseases. Nay, he wisely bestow'd these bodily Cures upon those chiefly, to whom it was the greatest Charity to do it ; the Rich might have been eased oftentimes of their Maladies, by their Physicians, and by the Rules of Art ; but the Poor must have languish'd under their Distempers, if our blessed Saviour had not miraculously relieved them.

Therefore, I say, the Character of our blessed Saviour is much more admirable, by his conversing and doing so much Good among the Poor, than if he had been ever so great, and done ever so much good in the Court of *Herod*. And as for that plain *Morality*, which you despise him for preaching ; even this did exceed all the studied *Philosophy* of the *Gentile* World.

Phil. Jesus Christ is by you generally allow'd, to be the greatest Pattern of Virtue that ever was, which is a Thing I could never bring my Thoughts about to assent to. His Religion would pretend to teach Men to mortify all Affections ; and therefore he should have been the most eminent Example of this himself. But we find he oftentimes could not govern his Passion ; he seems frequently to be outrageously angry with the *Pharisees*, calling them many hard Names, *Hypocrites*, and *Generation of Vipers*, &c. and liberally deals about his *Maledictions* among them, which is the perfect *Character* of an angry *Man*,

*Man, (as * Celsus says in this Matter) who when he can-
not convince will threaten. A Character not only unbecoming
a God, but unworthy of a prudent Man.*

*Vindication
of Christ's
Anger.
Christ a
Pattern of
the greatest
Patience.*

Cred. You have not been sufficiently observing of the Life of our blessed Saviour, when you tax him as an angry Person, who was the most patient one in the World. It must not be said, that our Saviour never had upon him the Passion of Anger; but this Passion was never criminal, either for the Cause, or for the Degree of it. And I doubt not but that it was the Design of Christ to suffer himself to be seen in some Degree of that Passion, to evince the Lawfulness of it upon some Accounts, and by his Example to confute the Doctrines of those *Heathen Stoicks*, who would condemn the Use of all Passions, and so make all those natural Tendencies, which God had implanted in our Souls, altogether superfluous. But our blessed Saviour's Doctrine is contrary to these paradoxical Notions, and forbids Anger, only when there is no just Cause for it, *Whosoever is angry with his Brother without a Cause, &c.* And his Life was exactly answerable to this Doctrine. He was angry, 'tis true, with the Buyers and Sellers in the Temple; and there was just Reason for it, to see God's House so irreligiously abused. He shew'd a Resentment to the *Pharisees*, and upon very good Grounds; because they, by their *Traditions*, had made void the moral Law of God; they excused Men from doing that which God had commanded, and laid upon them other unnecessary Burthens, which God had said nothing of. Besides, the Pride and Arrogance of this Sect, and their Contempt and Hatred of all that contradicted them, made it necessary not to make use only of mild Ratiocination to confute them, (for they scorned all Reason in respect of their Tradition,) but to use some Smartness in the Reprehension, to make them sensible of their Errors. These were such just and generous Causes of this Passion, as improved it into an extraordinary Virtue; but we never find in the Life of Christ, that he

* Celsus apud Orig. Ed. Cantab. p. 107.

was peevishly angry upon small Occasions; and upon the greatest, he still kept his Passion within the Bounds of Reason, for he always argues as well, under those Emotions of his Soul, as he did at other times. No one could reason better upon that Subject than our Saviour, when he drove the Money-Changers out of the Temple, *My House shall be called a House of Prayer, but you have made it a Den of Thieves.* But, when there was no Cause for some Degree of Anger, and where the Honour of God was not immediately concerned, the Life of our Saviour was the most perfect Pattern of Patience in the World. He answers very mildly to all those captious Questions, which his Adversaries brought to him to ensnare him: When they said he did his Miracles by the Power of the Devil, he very calmly demonstrates, that his Doctrine is contrary to the Devil's Kingdom: When they persecuted him, he prayed for them, and was willing to the utmost, to extenuate their enormous Guilt, *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.* These are not the Characters of an angry Person, but of a Soul perfectly subjected to Reason, and the Will of God.

But I have farther to urge, upon this Head, That some of our Saviour's Expressions have not that Keeness in them, which at first sight they seem to carry; and that there was more Reason for his using them, than there can be for ours. He calls them *Generation of Vipers*, which looks now like a very hard Word, but it was much mollified by common Use among the Jews, who meant no more by it than *ill Men*, or the *Seed of the Serpent*, Gen. iii. in Opposition to good Men, or the *Children of God*. And when he calls them *Hypocrites*, (tho' that is a Name we ought to be very cautious in giving to any Men, because we cannot positively tell whether they be so or no;) yet our blessed Saviour could see into all their clandestine Thoughts, and behold that little inward Reverence they bore to God Almighty, though their outward Actions pretended to so much of it; and therefore, having the exactest Grounds for the Truth of what he said, he could not apply that Name wrongfully to them;

them; nor could that be accounted a passionate Word dropt from him at random, which he was sure he had the justest Reason to call them by. But it is a shameful Calumny to say, that our Saviour made use of Passion for want of Reason, since his Discourses are full of the most exalted Reason in the World. Indeed he does not always make use of it, to the obstinate and captious *Pharisees*, because he knew it would be to no purpose, frequently sending them away with some severe Rebuke: But whenever he had any Auditors of a docile Temper, as he had, for Instance, when he preached his Sermon upon the Mount; he then teaches Morality upon such excellent Grounds, as the exactest of the heathen Philosophy falls short of.

Phil. Pray, Sir, excuse me if I think there is nothing so excellent in the Sermons of Jesus Christ, as you Christians imagine. For I take them, for the most part, to be poor vulgar Matters, which any ordinary Man may say, and * *Socrates* and *Plato* have said much better. They are only a few mean *Parables* of a *Sower of Seed*, of a *Labourer in a Vineyard*, or a *Wedding Feast*, which when the Moral is made out after the most fanciful Way, is but poor dull Morality at the best, and nothing comparable to those noble Ratiocinations among the *Ethnick Philosophers*. And in the Sermon upon the Mount, which is the best of the Performances, there is no rational Account given of those moral Duties he recommends, but he would have all those Rules to be taken upon his Word: For he gives not a Tittle of Proof of those Obligations, instead of that, only putting us off with an † *I say unto you*. Then how can you expect any sensible Man should be taken with such Lectures, which were fit only for the poor silly People, which he chose to have his Followers?

Cred. Those Parables, which you so much despise, were the most ancient and most useful Way of conveying

* Celsus apud Orig. Ed. Cant. p. 337. ib. p. 282.

† Julian apud Cyril. Ed. Spanh. p. 206.

Knowledge to the Minds of Men, and they often stick with them, when the Impressions, made by other rational Discourses, are obliterated and forgotten. Hence *Phædrus* says of the *Æsopick* Fables.

— *Diligenter intuere has nenia;*
Quantam sub illis utilitatem reperies!

*Mark well these Tales, for though they idle seem,
The greatest Profit may be had from them.*

And he farther shews how *Æsop*, in his Condition, was best able to teach Men their Duties this Way.

— *Servitus obnoxia,*
Quia quod volebat non audebat dicere;
Affectus proprios in fabellas transtulit,
Calumniamq; fictis elusit Focis. .

— *Poor Slave! he durst not plainly say,*
The noble Truths which in his Bosom lay:
The good Advice in merry Tales he dreſt,
And Calumny avoided by the Jeſt.

And History gives us an Account, that sometimes these Fables have had greater Force to persuade, than the most strenuous Argumentation of another kind. By one of these, *Menenius* persuaded the Commonalty of *Rome*, which was all in an Uproar, to be reconciled to the Senate; and by another of the like Kind, *Demosthenes* escaped being delivered up to *Alexander*. But the Jews, above all Nations, delighted in this Way of Reasoning, as *St. Hierom*, who lived long in *Paleſtine*, informs us in his Comment on *Math. xiv*. And the Jewish Books, at this Day, are full of such Parables as our Saviour uses.

And they are, oftentimes, ushered in with the same Phrase and Way of Speaking, as our Saviour introduces his; *Whereunto shall I liken such a Thing?* says Christ. The Jewish Books say, *A Parable: To what is the Thing like?*

To a Man, to a King of Flesh and Blood. Nay, in the Talmudical Treatises, there are Parables to be found, almost the very same with those of our Saviour. In the Treatise *Kilaim*, there is a Dispute of sowing upon the Rocks and Stones, and of mixing Wheat and Tares together. And in *Peah*, a Tract in the Talmud of Jerusalem, they speak of a Tree of Mustard-seed, which one might climb up into, like other Trees. Now, when this parabolical Way of teaching Morality was the most celebrated Method among the Jews, you ought not to blame our Saviour, who always industriously avoided Singularity, for his falling in with their common Practice.*

Our Saviour's Discourses agreeable to the Eastern Way of Reasoning.

But supposing Christ, as you would have had him, should have taught Morality in the Way of the *Heathen Philosophers*; the Jews then would have despised his Sermons more, than you do now. The *Eastern Way* of Reasoning was so different from that of the *West*, that the soundest Philosophy of *Greece* or *Rome* would have been mere Jargon and Cant, if it had been proposed in the philosophick Way, at *Jerusalem*. The only Method of Reasoning, which agreed with their Palates, was to usher in an handsome Simile, or Story, apposite to the Matter discoursed of; to apply a smart Saying of some ancient Worthy; or to bring good Proofs from their Law, or ancient Tradition; but to go to prove Morality to them, as *Plato* and *Tully* do, from the eternal Rules of Justice, from the Rectitude and Honorableness of Virtue, and the Pravity and Turpitude of Vice, would have been meer *Heathen Greek* to that Nation, and such a Way of Talking, as the wisest Men of their Way of Education would have vilely despised. Indeed, the *Greeks* and *Romans* were forced to argue after that Manner, because they wanted Revelation to instruct them in Morality; and they had no other Way, to come to the Knowledge of particular moral Obligations, but only to deduce them from general and uncontroverted Principles; but the Jews must contemn this round-about Way, as having a shorter

* Vid. Dr. Lightfoot's *Harmony of the New Testament*, p. 30.

Method, to come to the Knowledge of their Duty, only by having Recourse to the infallible Word of God. Their *Proof* was, not that *Socrates* or *Plato* had said this, or that Reason did dictate it; but because God had commanded it.

Therefore our all-wise Redeemer, (who well knew the Temper and Breeding up of the People he conversed with, and preached to) took Care that his Way of instructing them should be that which was most agreeable to their Education, and such which might tend more to their Edification, than if he had brought among them a Philosophick Method of Morality, which was in use only amongst the idolatrous Heathen. I warrant, some of you polite Gentlemen would have had our Saviour to have talk'd always some such spruce Speeches, as you find in *Isocrates* or *Libanius*; but our blessed Lord understood his Office better than so: For that would have but expos'd him, to the Mockery of his Auditors; nay such an unusual Rhetorick would have been as ridiculous, at *Jerusalem*, as a School Boy's Declamation would be, at one of our *English* Bars.

Besides, if the Men of Learning and Education could have understood such set and rational Discourses, as you would have our Saviour to have spoken; yet the ordinary People, whom our Saviour was to do most Good among, must only have come to have gaped at his Lectures, without understanding a tittle of them. Possibly some such Men as *Philo*, or *Josephus*, Men of an *Alexandrian* Education, who had conversed among the Heathen Philosophers, might have understood such a Vein of Arguing as you contend for; but the poor ordinary *Jews*, and Men, who only had an Education in *Judea*, could never have understood him. In short, that, which our Saviour took up with, was the Country and the popular Eloquence, and which he must expect to do most good by; and therefore, upon very wise Grounds, he chose to make use of this, rather than to please the itching Ears of a few Men, who could relish nothing but the Eloquence of *Greek* and *Latin* Books.

By making
use of the
Greek Phi-
losophy and
Eloquence,
he would
not have
been under-
stood by
People.

*He avoided
by this Pro-
lixity.*

Another very good Reason, why our Saviour did not give a Rationale of all the Moral Duties he preached was, Because that would have run his Lectures out into too great a Length; it would too much have burthened the Memory of his *Auditors*; and would have hindred his Sermons from being such comprehensive Compendiums of Divinity, as they now are. To have given a Rationale of but one or two Heads of some of his Discourses; to have shewn all the particular Excellencies, *viz.* of a *peaceable Disposition*, the *inward Quiet* and *Satisfaction*, and the *outward Love* and *Esteem*, the *blessed Fruits* of it in *Families*, and *Societies*, in *Church* and *State*, &c. To have gone through all the other *Duties*, after this Method, would have made the Sermon upon the Mount bigger than *Aquinas's Summs*; and so our *Saviour* must have been a great Deal longer a preaching, than he lived.

But lastly, there was no Need, that our Saviour should make use of such rational Harangues as others do. *He taught as one having Authority, and not as the Scribes.* He himself had Authority to command what was to be done, and not only to prove it. Other *Doctors* among the *Jews*, were to prove a Thing to be a Duty, because it was commanded in *God's Word*, or delivered heretofore by the inspired Prophets; but our *Saviour* was inspired himself, and his Miracles proved what he said to be the *Word of GOD*, better than any Arguments or Glosses upon Scripture.

Phil. I have something to urge against one of your Arguments, which asserts, That *Christ's Way* of speaking by Parables, and such *Jewish Ways* of *Reasoning*, was best understood by the People; when 'tis plain they were not: For *Matth. xiii.* *Christ* is said purposely to speak in Parables, that the *Jews* might not understand him. Which by the way is a very odd Way of giving *Laws*, or *obligatory Rules*, in such dark Terms, as no body can tell what they mean.

Cred. All the Parables of our *Saviour*, (as particularly those which gave *Representations* of *Moral Duties*, such as that of *Dives* and *Lazarus*, and of the *wise and foolish Vir-*
gins,

gins, &c.) are not difficult to be understood; and when he speaks as a *Legislator*, as in the *Sermon on the Mount*, he lays down his Rules in plain and direct Terms. But when he speaks of some of the *Mysteries of Christianity*, and the Rejection of the *Jews*, and the Preaching the *Gospel* to the *Gentiles*, or the like; he then only makes use of *obscure Similies*, which some of the captious *Jews*, who followed *Christ* out of no good Design, might not understand. And herein he did no otherways, than what *Iamblichus* says *Pythagoras* did, who said *many Things in a hidden and covert Manner, which those, who came to learn of him with a pure Mind might understand; but others, though they heard him, could not perceive his Meaning*. And so in the 13th Chapter of St. *Matthew*, there was a *promiscuous Multitude*, which followed *Christ*; all of which did not come with a good Design to learn his *Doctrine*; and that made him, at that Time, propose it more obscurely; but when those *captious People* were gone off, he then explained himself more openly to his *Disciples*, and some other *good People* which were probably with them. Or it was sufficient if he did it only to his *Disciples*, who would make it sufficiently known after his Death; there being very sufficient and material *Reasons*, that all the *Doctrines of Christianity* should not be revealed, till the *World* should be in a better *Disposition* to receive them.

Phil. There are several of *Christ's Actions* likewise, which do very much disgust me, as particularly the *Caravalcade he made upon his Asinego*, as one of our Friends * has expressed it. To ride upon such an odd Sort of Beast at the Head of a *Mob*, is an *Action* not becoming a wise or grave Man, more especially the *Messias* or *Son of God*. And does it not look like an *Affectation of Popularity*, to suffer the Rabble to *hosannah* him all along upon the *Road*, and to throw their Cloaths in the Way to grace the *Triumph*? If you and I were to see the same Thing done, by one whom we were not prejudiced by a previous Respect to, we could not but think it to be great *Vanity*, or *Enthusiasm*.

Christ's riding upon an Ass is not ridiculous.

Cred. There is a Complication of Mistakes *Philologus*, upon which you ground this Calumny against our blessed *Lord*. For you think it an odd Thing to ride upon an *Ass*, because Men don't usually do so in our *Western Countries*; and the *Eastern People*, in those Times, perhaps, would have laughed as much at our being such Cavaliers in the Time of Peace, as to mount Horses upon all Occasions, which they did very rarely, but in order to Battle. It was no *comical Thing*, as you Wits would make it, to see a Man in those *Ages*, and in that *Country*, to ride upon an *Ass*; for *Balaam*, who was a great *Courtier* to one of the Kings of those *Countries*, rode upon one, *Numb.* xxii. 28.

A Token of his Humility, and Nature of his Kingdom.

Neither was it any *Affectation of Popularity* which moved our *Lord* to this Action, for that was a Thing which he upon all Occasions avoided, forbidding the Miracles which he did to be divulged, and hiding himself from the People, when they would have made him a King. But he was pleased to make use of this mean Sort of Triumph, as a kind of *Hieroglyphical Representation* of the *Humility* which his *Religion* taught, and which, by this, he recommended to them. For this was the usual Way of the *Oriental People* to represent Things by, as *Micajah*'s pushing with Horns, and *Ezekiel*'s boiling the Pot. By this, he likewise represented the *spiritual Nature of his Kingdom*, which was not of this *World*; for when the *Jews* expected, that their *temporal Messias* should have rode in all the triumphal Glories of a *Roman Procession*, with a Chariot drawn by *Horses* of the noblest Breed, and captive Princes chained to it; He, to shew them their great Mistake in this Matter, made a Triumph of another Kind, upon a common Beast, borrowed of an ordinary Man, and not plundered from a dethroned King; he did not trample, like the *Roman Victors*, upon Scarlet and Gold, but only upon the mean Garments of the *common People*; and chose the weak Attendance of his *poor unarmed Disciples*, rather than the armed Guards, which surrounded the imperial Person. He might, if he pleased, have commanded to himself these, and a thousand Times greater Glories:

But,

But, when he suffered *Honours* to be paid him, he chose even at that Time to teach *Humility*, and a Contempt of the *Glories* of this *World*.

Besides, He permitted this *Honour* to be paid him, to demonstrate his *Kingly Office*, which it was necessary the People should be informed of ; and he having now, by Preaching a considerable Time, almost perfected his *prophetick Office*, by his submitting to this Triumph, *Providence* made Way for his entring upon his *Sacerdotal*, or his being a *Sacrifice for the Sins of the World*. If Christ had suffered the *People* to have proclaimed him a King before, the *Jews* would have laid hold of him, and hindered his Preaching ; and if he had not once submitted, though in the humblest Manner, to accept the *Honours* of that *Dignity*, they would not have known him to be a King as well as a *Prophet*, which the *Messias* was to be. And now his Preaching being finished, he acknowledged his Kingdom, not out of any ambitious Design, (for what Pleasure could so wise a Person take in such poor Honours ?) but to fulfill the Will of God, and the great eternal Designs of *Providence* ; and thereby to give an Occasion now at last to the *Jews* to murder him, that his *innocent Life* might be offered up to *God* for a Sacrifice for our Sins. This, *Philologus*, is no Matter of *Scoff* and *Ridicule*, but is a Train of the most *wise* and *adorable Providence*, which some Time or other you will praise and admire, or else will eternally grieve and tremble at.

But if this was any indecent Action of our *Saviour*, Jews inter-
the *Jews* would have been forwardest to expose it. But ^{pret this of} *the Messias*.
they know very well, that the same was prophesied of the *Messias* by *Zachary* the Prophet, quoted by the *Evangelist**. And the most learned Jews, *R. Eliezer*, *Nachman*, *Farchi*, *Abarbanel*, &c. own, That Prophesy to belong to the *Messias*, *Behold! the King cometh unto thee lowly, and riding upon an Ass*, &c. *Zach. ix. 4.* A Prophesy by which the *Jews*, as *Theodoret* says, were *εμεγνησθαι*, struck with Thunder ; and therefore some of them were forced to de-

* Vid. Bochar. An. Sacr. p. 113.

sert the ancient Interpretation of their *Schools*, which applied it to the *Messias*, and to explain it of *Zerubbabel*, who was a poor Prince. But these are modern Fetches, made out of despight to Christianity, and which some of the latter Jews are too generous to agree with. And therefore *Grotius* is not to be pardoned, for taking Part with *Aben Ezra*, who applies this to *Zerubbabel*, and gives our *Saviour* only the poor Come-off of a secundary Sense. The Comment of *Rabbi Solomon* looks much more Christian, *It is impossible to interpret this of any other than the Messias, when we see it fulfilled in no other Person.*

Phil. To be yet plainer with you, I cannot think that those Miracles which he is said to have *done* were true; but only he, being cunnering than the rest of the *People*, made them believe that strange Things were done by his Power, which either were never done at all, or else would have been done without him. If a sick Man who was naturally in a hopeful Way of *Recovery*, was seen accidentally by Christ, it was then given out that he cured him *. And, if the Man had an Opinion of his *miraculous Power* and *Holiness*, his Fancy might contribute a great Deal towards it; and therefore we find that a *good strong Faith* is always requisite for the Support of a Miracle. Nay, the *Evangeliſt* himself owns, That Christ could do no Miracles in his own Country, *because of their Unbelief*, Mat. xiii. 58. That is, they were acquainted with him from the beginning, and were not prejudiced with that extraordinary Opinion Men had of him, in other Places; and so would not let those Things pass upon them for Miracles, which deceived others.

Cred. It is not to be expected, but that Men of your Principles should disbelieve the Truth of our *Saviour's Miracles*; for if you were satisfied upon this Point, you must necessarily own the Truth of his *Doctrines*; and therefore, I don't wonder that they lay out all their Wit and Malice, to weaken the Belief of these. But to give

* Celsus apud Orig. Blunt's Notes in Philostr.

you Satisfaction, that the Miracles of our *Saviour* were not such crafty juggling Tricks, as you pretend, I desire you would consider a few *Reasons*, which I shall propose to you.

1. By the whole Character and Tenor of our *Saviour's Christ a :* Life, he appears to be a very good *Man*; and therefore ^{good Man,} could not be guilty of an *Imposture*, which no Body, but ^{and there-} _{fore no Im-} *Rogues and Cheats*, will be concerned in. Who can *postur.* believe, that so good a Person as JESUS CHRIST, who, all along his whole Life, made it his Business to do *Good*, to inform Men of their Duty, and to teach them the exactest Rules of Virtue; who executed his *miraculous Power*, not for Ostentation, and the Aggrandizing his Fame, but to do *Good* both to the *Souls* and *Bodies* of Men; who despised all profered *Honours*, and manifested a perfect *Contempt of the World*; who was so Kind and Obliging, so Meek and Patient, in all his Conversation; who prayed for, and laid down his Life, for his Enemies: What Man can believe (I say) that a Person, of such *wondrous Goodness*, would make use of such base Tricks, as you suggest? This may be supposed of an ambitious Man, or one of an ungodly Life, who had no Regard to Virtue, or who would do any Thing to gain a popular Applause; but can never be reasonably thought of so *good*, and *innocent*, a *Person* as our blessed *Lord*. You cannot suppose, that he counterfeited this *Goodness*; for, some Time or other, such an hypocritical Vizor would have dropped off, in his whole Course of Life. For such Men cannot always stand upon their Guard, and, in Conversation, they will now and then display what they really are, do what they can. And if this had been the Case of JESUS CHRIST, he having so many Enemies, some of them would have been sure to have catched hold of the Slip. Or if we can suppose him to have been ever successfully Cautious, after he set up for his supposed *Imposture*, yet how can we imagine him to have acted such a Part for thirty Years before his Preaching? There is no Ground for such a Suspicion, and the plain Openness of his Conversation, oftentimes with *Publicans and Sinners*,

does demonstrate that he was not acting the *Hypocrite's Part*, who would have industriously avoided such Acquaintance to gain himself a better Reputation.

*Because his
Miracles
done so of-
ten and be-
fore so ma-
ny.*

2. Men that set up for this Trade of *Imposture*, take Care to have as few Witnesses as ever they can in what they do, for a Multitude of Eyes will be apt to prie too nearly into their Tricks ; and if the Cheat happens to succeed once or twice well, they are afraid of *repeating it*, for fear of some unlucky Miscarriage. But there is nothing like this, in our *Saviour's Miracles*. He repeated them over and over, as often as there was Occasion for them, and cured Multitudes of *Blind* and *Lame* in the same Place. The Miracles, which he frequently did, were so publickly to be discerned, in the Face of so many Witnesses, that they were not, like strange Hear-say Stories, done I know not where, and before I know not whom, but before Multitudes of Spectators, many of which bore him a great Deal of Ill-will. If he had any covert Way of Curing these diseased Persons by natural Means, he would have chosen to have done it in private, but he only spake the Word in the Face of the whole Multitude, and distemper'd Persons became whole. And this the *Pharisees* oftentimes saw him do, and durst not question the Truth of his Performances ; they owned them to be performed by a supernatural Power, but maliciously attributed them to a diabolical one ; and at another Time when he cured the Man of the Palsey, they could not deny but that he really did cure him, finding Fault only for his doing it upon the *Sabbath-day*. He raised a dead Man to Life in the open Streets, as he was carrying to his Funeral, with all the Attendants about him ; so that if any Trick was play'd in this Matter, there were Witnesses enough to discover it. He increased the Loaves and Fishes at one Time for the Feeding four Thousand, at another five Thousand Men, *Mat. xv. 38*. Now 'tis a strange Thing, that none of all these should discover the *Imposture*, if there was any. Nay, it is not to be imagined, that any *Impostor* could be so simple, as to go to put a Trick upon such an Army of People, and yet hope that none of them should find out the Cheat.

3. The

3. The Nature of Christ's Miracles were such, that they could admit of no *Collusion*. Jugglers may play abundance of strange Tricks, because they are Masters of an artificial Slight of Hand, and use a great Deal of cunning Gesticulation to keep People's Eyes from an exact Sight of what they do, which if narrowly lookt into, would not at all be wondrous.

But our Saviour's Miracles can never be accounted for, this Way. No Juggler can make a sick Man believe, he is well; or a blind Man fancy, he sees ever afterward. It is possible, by some secret Cunning, that Christ might make five Loaves to appear to be ten; but he could never by such an Art make five thousand People think, they filled their Bellies with them. Legerdemain might put a Fallacy upon these People's Eyes; but such travelling People's Stomachs could never be cheated, after this Rate. What Trick could be play'd, when the Woman that touched but the Hem of his Garment, had her Issue of Blood dried up? Or what Juggling could there be, when he raised up Lazarus from the Dead, when the Corps stank, and the Spectator's Noses, as well as their Eyes, were Witnesses of the *Miracle*?

4. A Man that would set up for a Counterfeiter of such *Miracles*, which would cost a *Man* so much Pains to perform, and so much Danger, if found out, must needs expect some temporal Advantage by it. No Body could it. be so simple, to forfeit his Honesty, his Fame, and his Neck for nothing. He would expect some Recompence or other, for such an hazardous Undertaking, and not cheat for pure Cheating sake. But what Advantage did our Saviour make, or could he expect, from that *Imposture*, which you would suppose him to have carried on? As for *Fame*, and *Riches*, and *Honour*, which are the great Baits that set all your *Impostors* agog, it is plain he despised, and undervalued all these Things. There is no Doubt to be made, but that if his Eyes had been upon Gain, he might have drawn considerable Wealth from such a Number of People, which every where followed him; or at

least he might have raised himself above that Poverty, he chose to live in.

So many *religious Men* and *Women*, and some of them of considerable Fortune, would have been very proper Subjects, for a *Man* of such Designs to have worked upon ; but this was never objected, or suspected of him ; and he was so little Master of Riches, that he was forced to be at the Expence of a *Miracle*, to pay a small Tax. If *Fame* or *Honour* had been his Aim, he would have endeavoured to have spread and propagated the Glory of his *miraculous Works* ; but he rather endeavoured, upon all Occasions, to stifle them ; and, when the Multitude would have made him a King, he conveyed himself away from them. The other *Mock-Messias's* were spurred on to their *Impostures*, by the Hopes of that Kingdom, which our *Saviour* refused ; but it does not appear, that our *Saviour* had any other Aim, but to do *Good* to Men's *Souls* ; and, when ever they talked to him of a *temporal Kingdom*, he always told them *His Kingdom was not of this World*. If our *Saviour* had had any Spark of *Ambition* in him, That favourable *Opportunity* would have tried him ; for the *Jews*, at that Time, were full of Expectation of a *temporal Messias*, and he might have carried the whole *Nation* after him, if he had but set up for a *secular Prince*. For that, which disgusted the *Jews* most, and made many of his *Followers* leave him, was his Crossing their *Notions* with a *spiritual Kingdom*, which they had no Idea of. 'Tis plain, therefore, if our *Saviour* had designed any *secular Advantage* to himself, he would have closed with their fond *Opinions*, to have gained an Interest among them ; but contrariwise, he lost the Favour of many of their great ones, by *Reproving them for their Faults*, and, at last, slighted the *Kingdom*, they would have conferred upon him. Therefore (I say) no *Honour* could be a Bait to him to carry on an *Imposture*, who could so bravely despise the greatest of *Honours*. All that you can say, is, That he looked upon it as the greatest *Honour*, to be the *Ring-leader* of a *Sect*.

*Because of
the great
Penalty on
Impostors.*

5. But then we must consider, that though this has been the Inducement for several Impostors, to deceive the People, yet this has been, when they thought they were able to do it without any great hazard, especially of their Lives. Every one, who lived in the *Jewish Commonwealth*, must needs know what a capital Punishment was to be inflicted upon *False Prophets*, or *Impostors*, and therefore no one in his Senses would venture his Life, for the sake of such a Cheat, where there was not an extraordinary Advantage attending. As for those that set up for *Temporal Messias's*, the Case is widely different; they gathered after them a Number of Men in a hostile Way, who could defend them from the Power of the Law; but those who propagated a *false Religion*, in a peaceable Method, were left naked to the *Sword of Justice*, and therefore they could no otherwise but expect, to sacrifice their Lives for their *Doctrine*: And, according to your Supposition, this must be our *Saviour's Case*; and therefore, how can you suppose him to be so simple, as to expose his Life for the sake of a wild *Imposture*, and for the *Honour* of being a *Ring-leader* to some few giddy *Followers*? Indeed, in those Places, where *Liberty of Opinion* is tolerated, Men may venture upon such an impudent Design; but this is not to be supposed in a Nation, where the Laws were so severe upon *Innovators*.

Every one, who reads our *Saviour's Sermons*, must allow him to be a Man of *common Sense*; but he must have been a Man out of his Wits, to have gone about to carry on an *Imposture*, which he must have been certain to be executed for. Or, if he had any Hopes to evade the *Rigor* of the *Laws*, it must be by soothng the Men in *Authority*; but our *Saviour* did not in the least attempt this, when by his daily *Reproof*, he provoked the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, who only were able to support him; and therefore you must make him downright mad, to have managed an *Imposture* after that Rate.

6. If all these Miracles were Cheats and Delusions, tho' they had the good Luck to pass upon the People at first, yet some Time or other the Fraud must be discovered,
Such Numbers could not conceal a Cheat.
espe-

especially, since, if they were Cheats, they must be managed by a Combination of several People. Suppose, that 'twas agreed between *Lazarus* and *Christ*, that he should appear only to be dead, and to be raised by him again; that the Widow's Son plaid the same Trick; that the blind Men could see before; that the lame Men pretended only to halt; and that the *Five Thousand* Men gave only out a false Story, that they had their Bellies full out of such a small Provision, &c. Now if these Miracles were only pretended, and there being so many Men conscious to the Cheats, how should it come to pass, that none of all those should ever discover them? When a Number of Men are concerned in a Secrecy, even where the Cause is most just, some Traytor or other betrays the Intrigue; and therefore you cannot think, there would be more Fidelity in such a vile *Imposture*, as you suppose this to be. *Christ* had one false *Disciple* among the Twelve; and therefore, to be sure, all those *Five Thousand* Men could never agree to be Vouchers for such a lying Miracle. Or if they kept his Counsel in his more prosperous Estate; yet when he fell into Trouble, if they had any Inscrutability to accuse him of, to be sure some or other would have been brought to his Trial to accuse him; which would have given in more material Evidence, than any thing his Adversaries then objected against him. There is hardly one single *Imposture* advanced, but that something or other is started up in a little Time, which, by comparing of Circumstances together, discovers the Cheat: But for such a Multitude of *Impostures*, (which our *Saviour* must upon your Account be guilty of) carried on by a *Confederacy* of so many *People*, and in the space of so many Years never to be *discovered*; and for want of this, that the *Jews* should be forced to take up with such *poor Evidence* against our *Saviour*; and that all the Infidels, down from the *Apostolick Age* to this Time, should have never been able to make any such unfair Dealings appear; this is perfectly incredible, and more *mysterious*, let me tell you, than any thing that we say he did.

All Christ's
Enemies
own'd his
Miracles.

7. But is it not a little unreasonable, *Philologus*, that you should question the Truth of our Saviour's Miracles, which have been owned for so many Ages, and which the greatest Enemies of the *Christian Religion* never could be so hardy as to question? The *Unbelievers*, in the Time of *Christ* and his *Apostles*, and in the next following Generations, were the best able to examine into the Truth of these Matters; but they, after all the *Inquisition* their Wit or Malice could make, could not find but that our Saviour did these *miraculous Works*, which are attributed to him; and therefore they set themselves only to give an Account, how he came to do them otherways, than by the *Power of God*, which they were unwilling to own he was assisted with. The *Jews*, who were *contemporary* with our Saviour, attributed them to a *diabolical Power*, saying, *He cast out Devils by Beelzebub the Prince of the Devils*. The Heathen Infidels, as *Hierocles*, *Celsus*, *Julian*, &c. do contend, that they were done by *Magick*; and the *modern Jews* never pretend to disown the Matters of Fact, but only say, *these extraordinary Things were done by a right Pronunciation of the Shem Hamphoras*, or the inexpressible Name of *God*, which Christ having, by Cunning got out of the Temple, enabled him, (as they tell us) to do all the Miracles which he did. And besides, the modern *Jews* are so far from disowning the *miraculous Power* of Christ, that they have several *Stories* of it in their *Talmud*; as *Mahomet* himself, in his *Alcoran*, has the same. Therefore, methinks, it has a little too much the Air of Confidence, for the *Unbelievers* only of this Age, to deny his *miraculous Power*, which has constantly been allowed, by the most inveterate Enemies of Christianity, for so many hundred Years; some of which lived so nigh the Time, when these Matters were transacted, and were so sharp-fighted withal, and ow'd such a Spight to Christianity, that they would have detected the Juggle, if there had been any, altogether as well as our Eagle-eyed Wits now a-days pretend to do.

Reason why
Christ did
so few Mi-
racles in
his own
Country.

8. As for your *Objection*, of *Christ's not being able to do Miracles in his own Country*, That is grounded on a Mistake. For in that Place it is not said, that *Christ* could not, or did not do any Miracles; but *He did not many Miracles because of their Unbelief*. And to use the Words of the learned *Grotius* upon the Place. *Christ did Miracles round the Country, that they who knew nothing of him, might believe in him. For them that began to believe, he added new Miracles, by which they might be confirmed in their new Faith. But to those, who despised the first Miracles, he repeated no more, least the Liberality of God should grow cheap.* And indeed for such People that slighted his Miracles, what *Reason* had God to afford them more, to trample upon still? But your Argument, which makes an antecedent Faith, or *good Opinion* of *Christ*, necessary for his working *Miracles*, has no *Foundation* at all. For wherever *Christ* first worked *Miracles*, the *People* were incredulous before they saw his *Works*, so that the first *Miracle* he wrought must carry its own Evidence with it, and be truly *miraculous*. And then what *Reason* is there to think, that he should work true *Miracles* to convert the *Infidels*, and sham ones to *beguile the Believers*? If your Suggestion be true, that he was afraid of his *Imposture's* being *discovered* where he was known; why would he venture to do any *Miracles* at all? For the *History* allows, he did some, though not many; and *one or two* such false Tricks plaid among a prejudiced *People*, would have endangered his Reputation, as much as an hundred.

Phil. But unless *Christ* had some foul Game to play, what was the *Reason* that he pick'd up such a Number only of *illiterate stupid Auditors**, a Parcel of *poor Fishermen* and *dissolute Publicans*, and a wretched Tribe of *Mob*, who were wont to run after him? If he had † designed to teach *Morality* seriously, without any By-ends, and had done real *Miracles*, he would have had Men of a better Figure to have been his *Disciples*; which would have much contributed to the spreading of the *Gospel*, when it was

* Celsus apud Orig. lib. 2.

+ Julian apud Cyril. lib. 6.

confirmed by the *Testimony* of those, who had a better *Judgment* and *Reputation*, than those first *Propagators* of it. But why did he sort out such *poor ignorant People*, that instead of *Sense*, were qualified only with *Credulity*, unless he had designed to make a *Property* of them? If he had designed really to instruct them, he would rationally have taught them their *Duty*; but instead of this, as * *Celsus* says, he *bids them only believe, and they shall be saved*; he does not cry out on them, *to consider the Reason of what he says, but only to believe him*. Which is a Way of proceeding which seems to carry much Suspicion with it.

Cred. The Reason why so many *poor* and *unlettered People* were first called to Christianity, was, not because their Simplicity might be more easily imposed upon, but because such Persons had better *Dispositions* towards it. Neither our *Saviour*, nor his *Apostles*, did refuse *Disciples* of any Rank whatsoever; nor were they absolutely destitute of wise and rich Men; for *Nicodemus*, *Joseph of Arimathea*, and *Sergius Paulus*, were Men of a considerable Figure; but their greatest Harvest was among the *Poor* and *Unlearned*, because they were better qualified for the *Reception of the Gospel*.

For rich Men were so elated by the *Grandeur* of their *Condition*, they had such a *Respect of Persons*, and such a Love for the *Honours* and *Gaieties* of this *World*, that they rarely could be perswaded to attend to the *Reasons* which were offered by Persons of such a mean Character and *Equipage*, as our *Saviour* and his *Apostles* were. They might have listen'd to a Word or two, which was spoken by some great *Doctor* of the *Sanhedrim*; but they would not vouchsafe to hear what was said, by such poor *Itinerant Preachers*. Besides, the *Doctrine* which they taught, was all *Gall* and *Wormwood* to such Persons; that *Contempt of the World* which Christ's *Religion* did recommend, that extraordinary *Charity to the Poor*, that *Patience*, *Humility*, *Resignation to God's Will*, and *Forgiveness*, and *loving of Enemies*, which he preached, seem'd perfectly inconsistent

*Poor better
qualified to
receive the
Gospel than
Rich.*

* Celsus apud Orig. Ed. Cant. p. 282. & p. 303.

with a great *Fortune*. And therefore 'tis no great Wonder, that but few of them became *Converts* to such unpalatable *Doctrines*.

*The Ignorant than
the Learned.*

And, as for the Wise and Learned of that Time, they were as much prejudiced against the *Religion*, which our *Saviour* taught. The literate *Jews*, who had been bred up under the great *Rabbins* of the *Sanhedrin*, had their Thoughts so wholly bent upon the ancient *Traditions* of their Church, and the celebrated *Books* and *Sayings* of their Masters, that they looked down with Contempt upon this new *Doctrine*, preached by Men of so mean Education as Jesus Christ and his illiterate Followers; and thought no one could teach any thing worth attending to, but who had come out of one of their *Rabbinical Schools*. The *Greeks* had their Heads full of *Pagan Philosophy*, and could relish nothing but what favoured of their fashionable *Eloquence*, and so despised the *Propagators of Christianity*, as a Parcel of simple, prating, *Enthusiastical Mechanicks*. And therefore it was very natural, that our blessed Lord, and his Apostles, should make very few *Proselytes* out of this sort of Men, when the Pride of their Learning, and their Opinion of their vain *Philosophy*, was so great a Bar against the Reception of the plain *Doctrines of Christianity*.

*This Choice
made the
Progress of
the Gospel
more miracu-
lous.*

But our *Saviour* had another *Reason*, besides the natural Tendency of the Thing, why he chose to have his *Followers* of the poorer and illiterate Sort of Men, viz. To shew the *miraculous Assistance of God* in the propagating the *Gospel*, and the mighty Force of *Christianity*, to make its Way through the greatest *Obstacles*. There would be one *material Argument* lost, for the Proof of the *Divinity* of the *Christian Religion*, if our *Saviour* had taught it first to the greatest Clerks among the *Jews* or *Greeks*, or made his Disciples out of Men of great Families and Fortunes. It might then be objected, that it was no Wonder that this *Religion* thrrove so well in the World, when it was carried on by the united Force of the *Eloquence* and *Reason* of such celebrated Scholars, and when it was furthered by Men of such Interest and Reputation.

putation. You Unbelievers, then, would have fallen very hard upon us with this Argument, that Christianity was only a *Politick Contrivance*, and that it might be very well carried on with that Success it was, when it had all human Advantages possible to assist it. And therefore our blessed *Lord*, in his infinite Wisdom, must foresee the *Inconvenience* of this *Objection*; and upon that Account, chose his first Disciples to be illiterate Men, who, by the Assistance of *God's Holy Spirit*, should carry on a new Religion against all human Probability, and bear down the Jewish Ceremonies, and Heathen Idolatry, although supported by all the Arts and Diligence of the learned *Rabbins* and *Philosophers*. And this is the Sum of the Apostle's Argument. *Not many Wise nor many Noble are called: But God hath chosen the foolish Things of the World to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak Things of the World to confound the Things which are mighty. And base Things of the World, and Things which are despised hath God chosen; yea, and Things which are not, to bring to nought Things that are: That no Flesh should glory in his Presence,* 1 Cor. i. 16, &c.

And so you talk a little too fast, when you say, that our Saviour required nothing of his Disciples but *only Faith*, or barely to *believe*. 'Tis true that he designed Faith to be the Ground-work of his Religion, and therefore he endeavours to lay this Foundation first, that they should believe him to be the *Messias*. For, when they believed, the Doctrines of his Religion would be more easily instilled into them; because, then, they would carry Authority with them, and he need not be put, upon all Occasions, to prove what he taught by Scripture or Reason. But we do not find that our Saviour meant, that Men should only take up with Faith, and nothing more; for if he did, why should he have put himself to the Trouble of preaching his most excellent Sermon upon the Mount, where the practical Rules of Morality were laid down, with a greater Exactness than ever was in the World before? But I must freely own, that Men had greater Thoughts of *Faith*, in the *Apostolick Times*,

*Why Christ
required
Faith in
his Disci-
ples.*

Times, than they have, in these cold Ages of Christianity. Faith then was not thought, only a bare Assent to the Truth of Christ's Doctrine, and his being the *Messias*; but such an inward Principle, or Effect of God's Grace in their Hearts; as gave them not only Conviction of, but a Zeal for their Duty, inspiring them with such flaming Affections and Love of God, and such a Longing for Heaven, as made them wish for Martyrdom to get thither the sooner. And let some Men laugh, as much as they please, at inspired and infused Habits; yet if a good Man does attentively read God's Word, devoutly meditate upon our Saviour's Life and Actions; and accustom himself to frequent and earnest Prayers; he will quickly find his Thoughts animated with that noble Sense of Religion, with such a stedfast Belief of, and such a hearty Love for our Saviour's Doctrines, as will give him that Relish of true Christian Faith, which is never to be had from the flat *Rationales* which some Books do give of them.

Mean Men as good Judges of Miracles as others. But when you insinuate, that our Saviour made Choice of such mean Auditors, the better to make his pretended Miracles pass upon them; I will only ask you, don't you think these ordinary People had their common Senses, as well as other Men? Could they not tell Wine from Water, a blind Man from a seeing one, and a dead Man from a live one? And if they could do this, they might as well judge of our Saviour's Miracles, as any *Philosopher* or *Virtuoso* in the World.

Phil. There is another Thing in the History of Christ, which I cannot digest; which is, that you cry him up as the greatest Example of Patience, and yet he does not seem to bear his Sufferings and Death with any tolerable Courage. But hear what *Celsus* says to you Christians: *If you would deify a Man for Bravery at his Death, you have the Example before you of Hercules, Æsculapius, and Orpheus. But there are yet braver than these.* Anaxarchus, *when he was thrown into a great Mortar, and most cruelly pounded there, he despised the Torment, and said this worthy Thing indeed of the Divine Spirit: Beat the Bellows, or blown*

blown up Skin of *Anaxarchus*, for you do not beat him. Now this Anaxarchus was no more than a natural Philosopher. What did Epictetus do? Why, when his Master was torturing his Leg, without Concern he smiled in his Face, and said, You will break my Leg: And when he had broken it, he only said, Did not I tell you that you would break it? But what did your God say comparable to this? Nay, I will add farther, That his praying that the Cup might pass from him, and his complaining of God's Desertion of him upon the Cross, seem to shew a Fear and Despondency, unworthy of any great Mind under Afflictions.

Cred. Any one, who is acquainted with the Lives of the Philosophers, knows it was a chief Part of their Study to invent smart Sayings to be talk'd of, which was the Thing they principally aimed at; but then it is observable, that these Sages who said so many fine Things, seldom did any good ones. They did not set half the Value upon a good charitable Action, as they did upon an Apothegm; and Men of the most vicious Lives, have utter'd some of the finest Flowers of the *Pagan* Morality. 'Tis the Character of our Saviour, and his true Followers, *Non magna loquimur, sed vivimus: Not to talk great Things, but to live them.* And one good Action of Christ and his Apostles, was worth an hundred of the Philosophers Sayings. If a Man had been to look into the Heart of one of these Philosophers, when he was asserting one of these Sentences, he might have read there a great deal of Pride reflected upon himself for the witty Thought, a great deal of impotent Malice against his Enemies, and a great deal of Fear and Impatience, tho' a predominant Pride made him carry off all, with a Jest. But when Celsus says, What did Christ say comparable to these? Origen answers admirably well, His Silence under the Whips and the Torments, shewed a greater Courage and Patience than the most eloquent Greek could shew, by speaking in those Circumstances. To which we may add one thing more, but such an one as eclipses all the Glory of the Heathen Philosophy, which is, that our Saviour, under his Sufferings,

prays for his Enemies, *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.* Here is the greatest Degree of Love and Charity discovered towards the most inveterate Enemies, whilst the Sayings of your suffering *Philosophers* carry in their Face an unregenerate Malice, and spightful Reflection upon their Adversaries.

*Reason of
our Saviour's pray-
ing that the
Cup, &c.*

As to what you object against our *Saviour's Praying, That the bitter Cup might pass from him;* I cannot tell, why you should impute that to his Want of Courage or Patience. He made not passionate Exclamations, he shew'd no desponding Grief, nor any other indecent Passion, under his Torments, but bore them all with as much Mildness and Patience, as human Nature is capable of. Suppose, one of your *Heathen Philosophers* had been in our Saviour's Place, and endured as much Pain in Mind and Body, as He? He would perhaps have said, that Pain was no Evil, and that his Mind was fix'd upon such a firm Basis, that his Torments were insensible; though, at the same Time, every Groan and Shrug would have given the Lie to his Principles. But our blessed Lord, with all the Truth and Modesty of an innocent Person, own'd the *Imperfection of human Nature*, and its being shocked at such a direful Passion; but then, by the Assistance of Grace, he quickly overcoming those natural Strugglings, with the greatest Meekness and Patience, resigns himself perfectly to the good Pleasure of God. *O my Father, if it be possible, let this Cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt,* Mat. xxvi. 39.

Nor does Christ's crying out, *Eli, Eli, lama sabach-thani*, make any thing for what you assert. For our Saviour there repeats only a Part of a *Psalms*, which was a Prophesy of him, and applicable to his present Circumstances; and therefore it cannot be expected that every Word of it should as exactly agree to our *Saviour's Condition*, as if the Expressions had been framed by himself. Besides, we freely own, that our *Saviour*, when he used these Words, was under the Pressure of the greatest Pain and Grief that ever was known; he not only felt the Torments of the Cross in his Body, but had his Soul weigh-

ed down with the Grief of the whole World's Sins upon it; and, if the Sense of a Man's own Sins are apt, oftentimes, to raise a Despondency in him; how like a perfect Dereliction must our *Saviour's* Grief appear, whose Soul, at one Time, was oppressed with Grief, for the Sins of so many Millions of Offenders?

Phil. My next *Exception* is against the Story of *Christ's Resurrection*. If it were true, it would not be such a wondrous Miracle, as you make of it. For it would not be the first Time, that an executed *Malefactor* has come to Life again.

And Histories make mention of several others, who have returned to Life again a considerable Time after they were seemingly dead. As * *Aristeas Proconnesius* mentioned by *Herodotus*; † *Hermotimus Clazomenius*, whose Soul did frequently go out of his Body, and return again; *Epimenides of Crete*, who slept in a Cave for fifty Years together; and *Harmonius's Son*, who lay dead for ten Days, and revived upon the Funeral Pile. But, for my Part, I do not find any Ground to believe this Relation of his Resurrection; for the Matter is attested only by the Followers of Christ, whose Interest it was to make him alive again, or else People would have laughed at them, for their believing a dead Man to be the *Messias*, besides, some of the Witnesses were silly Women, one of which had been a crazed *Demoniack*. Now, who can believe a Matter of Fact, attested after this rate? Besides, what should be the Reason of Christ's being so shy of being seen after the Resurrection? And why did he not converse as freely with his Disciples, as he did before? The Relation of his dropping in so accidentally upon them, and sometimes not to be known by them, and his giving them only some imperfect Views and Glances of himself, over what he had done at other Times, shews something in this Matter more than ordinary.

* *Celsus apud Orig. lib. 3. Ed. Cant. p. 125.*

† *Id. Lib. 2. p. 94. & p. 101.*

Christ re-
ally dead.

Cred. I wonder, *Philologus*, you should be so afraid of believing a Matter so well attested as our Saviour's Resurrection, and yet you can swallow down all the Improbabilities and Contradictions, which the contrary Opinion includes in it. What a Jest is it to compare the Resurrection of Christ with the Recovery of some hang'd Malefactors? Do you think seriously, that the Death upon the Cross was any thing like our ordinary Suspension? You know in that Punishment, the miserable Criminal was well nigh whipt to Death with Rods or Scourges; the tenderest Part of his Body, the Palms of his Hands, and the Soles of his Feet, were pierced thro' with Nails, and so suffered to linger out the little Remains of Life in extreme Pain and Anguish; and was never taken down from the Cross, till he was dead, which the attending Executioners did make sure of, by breaking his Bones, or stabbing his Body. Now, though it may sometimes happen, that, when a Man is executed only by Strangulation, the Constriction of his Throat may be abated, and his Blood, when it is not quite cold and stagnated, may come to circulate again; yet this is impossible naturally to happen in a Person, that was almost expiring under the Lashes of the Whips, that for several Hours was torn by the Nails of the Cross, and had at last his Heart pierced through by a Soldier's Spear. The Executioners, who were used to these Matters, knew very well, when the Person was fully dead, and understood the great Severity they must undergo, if they did not inflict the utmost of the Sentence upon the Criminal. Or if this was possible to have happened, it must be by great Care of the Body, by keeping it warm all the while, and cherishing it; but our Saviour's Body had the Funeral Rites immediately bestow'd upon it, and laid only in a cold stony Grave. The Chill and Damps of such a Place would, probably, in all that Time, have killed any one that was not of the hardiest Constitution; but a Body so miserably wounded and torn, as our blessed LORD's was, could never have revived.

But

But what are these Instances of *Aristeas Proconnesius*, &c. Instances of
Aristeas,
&c. confu-
ted. to the Purpose? *Aristeas* was a Man, who, *Herodotus* says, dropt down dead in a Fuller's House. The Fuller went to tell his Friends what happened, and when he came back, no *Aristeas* was to be found, and several Persons said they saw him at the same Time at a distant Place Seven Years after he appeared at *Proconnesius*, and made Verses. Many Years after, he appeared among the *Metapontini* in *Italy*, and advised them to build an Altar to *Apollo* and him. Now is not this worthy Stuff to be compared with the *History* of our *Saviour's Resurrection*? *Origen* argues very well against the Silliness of this Story; because there could be no manner of Use in this Prodigy: But our *Saviour's Resurrection* was, to confirm an excellent *Institution of Religion*. But it was not worth while to come into the World to write Verses, and to occasion the building of an Altar or two. And we need not take any great Pains to confute this Fable, which is discarded by the most judicious of the Heathens, by *Pliny*, *Plutarch*, *Iamblicus*, and *A. Gellius*; and is a monstrous Story either of *Herodotus*'s coining, or the *Pythagoreans*, who as *Heinsius*, in his Notes upon *Maximus Tyrinus*, has shewn, were above all the *Philosophers*, most pleased with such Stories. As for the Story of *Hermotimus*, *Lucian* looks upon it as a Fable, and *Pliny* says, his Body only lay half dead. And as for the long Sleep of *Epimenides*, *Pliny* and *Diogenes Laertius* say, it is an idle Tale; the Truth of which is, that all this Time he was absent, to study the Nature of Plants: And *Maximus Tyrinus* says, this was only a moral Fable of *Epimenides*'s own coining, to shew forth, that Man's Life is only like a long Dream. And so, lastly, as for *Harmonius*'s Son, it is plain that Story, as it is told in *Plato*, was designed only as a *Physiological* Fable. *Plato* himself calls it $\mu\delta\theta\sigma$, $\alpha\pi\tau\alpha\lambda\sigma\tau$, &c. and the Way of telling it imports as much; for he mentions there the *Sirens*, and the *Parcae*, and such other *Mythological* Romance, which he would never have done in a true Story. But *Plutarch* owns this to be only a Fable, of which there is an allegorical Sense to be given; for when *Plato*

brings in *Eris*, the Son of *Harmonius*, speaking of the State of Souls; he means that the Soul is generated of Harmony, and joined to a Body, which when it leaves, it goes into the Air to be born again. And this is the rational and true Account of *Plato's Story*. Now is not this rare Stuff for Men, with a serious Face, to confront with our *Saviour's Resurrection*, which was so credibly attested by so many unexceptionable Witnesses?

*Testimony
of Christ's
rising from
the dead
unexceptionable.*

You cannot say that this is related like one of the idle Tales, which People are wont to raise about Ghosts, which they fancy they have seen, it may be between sleeping and waking, in the Night-time, when any thing may be made every thing by Fancy, or Fear, or Prepossession. But our *Saviour* was seen often in the broad day-time, when no body expected him, and his Body handled and felt by those that doubted of the Sincerity of it. 'Tis plain, that those that saw him could not be impos'd upon by a melancholy Fancy, which might incline them to think that *they saw a Ghost*; for some of his *Beholders* were afraid that he was a *Ghost*; but our *Saviour* undeceives the Mistake, and bids them *handle him and see*, for a *Spirit hath not Flesh and Bones which he had*. Their Eating and Drinking with him after his *Resurrection*, and Conversing with him, at several Times, during the *Forty Days*, before his *Ascension*, shews that he could be no *Phantasm*; and we may question, upon the same grounds, the Reality of any Natural Body. All that can be said is against the Truth of the Relation; for no one can seriously believe, that such a Number of People should have a *Melancholy Dream*, that they all saw a dead Man for so many times together, when their Eyes were wide open. But in behalf of the *Relation*, what can be more *Authentick* than this? If one or two sober Witnesses are to be credited, why not those that report this? If you say that the Women who first saw Christ after his *Resurrection*, were idle People, and not to be credited; yet *Peter*, and *John*, and the rest of his Disciples, who saw him afterwards, could not all lie under the same Imputation. *Peter* himself denied him upon his Tryal, when he was under

under no Danger for sticking to him, tho' before he was sure he was the *Messias*; then how should he seal it with his *Blood* that he was so, and that he was risen from the Dead, when he was sure (upon your Supposition) he was an *Impostor*. Nothing could work this great Change in him, but that he was absolutely certain that he was risen from the Dead, to make him thus courageously to his Death own this Matter of Fact. Or, if you suppose that all the Disciples combined together to propagate this Story; yet how should *Five Hundred* more of the Brethren, whom he is said to be seen by *1 Cor. xv. 6.* agree in the same Forgery? *Two or Three* can hardly ever so agree upon a false Story, to make things to hang together, that the Cheat shall not be discovered; but that such a Number of these should be in a Cabal, to make such a Lie pass upon the World, and none of all these fall off or falter in their Evidence, I am sure is impossible. The *Apostle St. Paul* says, when he wrote that Epistle to the *Corinthians*, That many of those *Five Hundred* Brethren were then alive; and therefore no one can suppose him to have had the Confidence, to have appealed to so many Witnesses, if the Matter had not been unquestionable.

Think you not that every *Jew* or *Gentile*, that had been startled with this strange *Relation*, would not have enquired, when he came to *Jerusalem*, of the Truth of these Matters; where there were so many People, that could inform him of the perfect Certainty? and, if he had not received full Satisfaction by indubitable Evidence, do you think that ever he would have professed such a strange and hazardous Faith? Imagine, that a remarkable Person who was publickly executed at *London*, and afterwards buried, and a Guard set to attend the Grave, that no one should play Tricks with the Body; imagine, that this executed and interred Person, should appear within a few Days, suppose, in a Court of Judicature, or in a Church, where *five Hundred People* were gathered together, who all knew him, and should there converse with them, be handled by them, and shew

them the *discriminating Marks* of his *Body*, think now what a Noise this would make. But if the *five hundred Persons* should all constantly affirm the Truth of the Thing; who could forbear believing it, tho' ever so strange; especially if the *Relators* got only Ill-Will, and Danger, for reporting it? would not every body, who came to *London*, enquire into the Truth of this Story, where it was so easie to be satisfied about it, and any one of the meanest Capacity might find out whether it was a Cheat or no? For if he found that such a great Number of Eye-witnesses did positively avow the Truth of the Matter of Fact, and all agree upon the same Circumstances in their *Relation*, at the same Time when the *Government* was threatening them for the speaking of it, it is impossible but that such Person, if unprejudiced, must believe the *Relation*, notwithstanding the surprisingness of it. For Men may with as much Reason disbelieve their own Eyes, as the concurrent Testimony of such a Number of Witnesses.

Phil. But then there is something in the *Evangelists* related, which makes this whole Matter look suspicious, and that is the *Story of the Disciples stealing away the Body*. 'Tis certain there was some such Story among the Jews, or else the Writers of the *Gospel* would not have been salving it, and when the common People found the Body missing, 'twas easie to persuade them Christ was risen from the Dead.

Cred. It is allow'd, that this was a *Story* frequent among the *Jews* in the Time of *Justin Martyr*, who makes mention in two Places of an *Embassy*, sent from the *Sanhedrin* to all the dispersed *Jews*, to take heed of a new *Sect*, raised by one *Jesus*, a *Galilean*, whom they had crucified; but his *Disciples* stealing away his *Body*, pretended he was risen from the Dead, and did ascend into *Heaven*. And now we have allow'd you this *Story*, What does it make for you? Nay, rather, What a *wonderful Support* is it of the *Truth* of our *Saviour's Resurrection*? For this *Story* continuing among the *Jews*, does very much confirm the *Truth* of the *Evangelist's Relation*; and if 'tis plain they tell *Truth* in one

Part of the *Matter of Fact*, they must be supposed to do so in the rest. If they be so *open* and *sincere* as to relate that *malicious Story*, which the *Jews* had trump'd up against them, why should we think, they are not as *Faithful* in any Thing else? All St. *Matthew* adds, more than what the *Sanhedrin* own in their *circulatory Letter*, is, *That there was a Guard set*, which is very probable; for they who believed Christ to be an *Impostor*, and who, they knew, had foretold to his Disciples, *That he would rise again the third Day*, would naturally have suspected that such a Trick might be play'd; but if they took Care to guard the *Sepulchre* for three or four Days, they knew they should render then the *Imposture* most manifest. Therefore, I say, there is no Reason to suspect the Truth of St. *Matthew's Relation* as to the Guard, but that he told the *Story* just as 'twas related among the *Jews*, in the Time when he *wrote*. For no one can suppose he was so confident, as to make mention of *Soldiers* being placed about the *Sepulchre* to watch, if there had been no such Thing; and when there were so many People alive, who could have contradicted it?

And now see how clearly this proves the *Truth of Christ's Resurrection*. For this manifestly evinces, That our *Saviour* had predicted his *Resurrection*, which made the *Jews* so cautious against his Disciples practising any Thing, which might seem to make *good* their Master's Word. But unless Jesus Christ really knew he was to rise again, how could he be so hardy to assert it? If he design'd only an *Imposture* upon the World, and to have the Credit of being the Founder of a *new Religion*, this was the most imprudent Means in the World to effect it. For if he did not rise again after his *Death*, all his Followers must have left his *new Religion* for Shame, as being *set up* by a *lying Deceiver*. But however, no *Impostor* in the World could be so silly, to put his *Religion* in danger of vanishing within three Days after his *Death*. If an *Impostor* were not a perfect *Ideot*, he would allow himself more Time than this, before he would publickly be proclaimed a *Cheat*; he would probably have allowed fifty or an *hundred*

dred Years to run out before his *Resurrection*, so that before that Time his Friends might be dead, that they might not upbraid his Memory with the *Deceit*; hoping that, within that Time, the new *Sect* might get such *Strength* and *Number*, as to be able to subsist, notwithstanding a *Disappointment*. Therefore, unless Christ knew certainly he was to rise again in *three Days*, he would never have pretended to it; for this would have been at once to destroy the Religion he had been so long a preaching, and, within three Day's Time after his *Death*, not to have one Disciple left. You cannot say he had Hopes, That his Disciples would convey away his Body, for that was too hazardous an Enterprise for them to undertake, who forsook him upon his Trial only; or that those, whom you suppose so grossly to be abused by him, should bear him so much *Good-will*, as to support his *Credit*, after he had so basely imposed upon them.

Again, This *Story* carries with it a Crowd of Improbabilities and Contradictions. Suppose the Disciples had a Mind to steal his Body away, yet how should they dare to *attempt it*? Would a few poor unarmed Men venture to break open a Grave, which was surrounded with *Soldiers*? But, you'll say, the *Soldiers* were negligent, and asleep. But how could the Disciples suppose, that the *Soldiers* should be so negligent? And how came they to nick the Time so exactly, when they were all asleep? For they cannot be supposed, to have slept all the Time, they were upon the Guard. Or how came none of them to wake, all the Time they were engaged in this *Theft*? To roll such a great Stone away from the Mouth of a Cave, must take up a considerable Time, and would have made so much Noise, as would, in all Probability, have roused up a drowsy Soldier; and then the Enterprise had been for ever spoiled, and the Attempters ruin'd. But suppose them to have rolled away the Stone, with all the Silence and Success imaginable; they, to be sure, would venture no Hazard more, but would have slunk away with the Body, as fast as they could. But if the Disciples did steal away the Body, they must act like Mad-

men

men in the midst of such Dangers ; for there they stay to strip the Body, and lay the Napkin in one Part of the Sepulchre, and wrap up the Grave-Cloaths in the other, as *two or three* of the *Evangelists* relate the *Marter*, whom you your self cannot imagine to falsify, in such a *circumstantial Relation*. Now pray consider, how much Time would be taken up, in stripping off the Grave-Cloaths from an *Eastern Corps*. Those Grave-Cloaths were a Sort of *Fasciae*, or thin Slips of Linen, which were rolled round the Body ; so that about a dead Body there might be many score Yards of Filleting, which being bound over those viscous Balsams, they used, must make it a long Work to unroll so much Bandage. But, that the Disciples should do all this unnecessary Work, in the midst of so much Danger, and not immediately carry off the Body, which they might as well have done without it, is a Point, *Philologus*, that I confess we Christians have not Faith to believe.

Phil. But still you drop a material Thing objected, *Why Christ should be so shy of his Appearance after his Resurrection.* How do you get over that ?

Cred. You make a very ill *Construction* of these Passages of our *Saviour's Life*, to think that there was any Trick play'd by the *Apostles*, because our *Saviour* did not so frequently converse with the Disciples, as he did before. For our *Saviour* appear'd to them, so often, and in such a Manner, as was sufficient to overcome the greatest *Doubtfulness*, and the most *obstinate Incredulity*.

There are a great many Times which he is recorded, in that short *History* of the *Gospel*, to have appeared to his Disciples, and probably there were many more. He shew'd himself to the *Women* just after his *Resurrection*; after that to *Peter* alone ; and then to the whole Number of the *Apostles*: At another Time, when they were Fishing in the Sea, when he caused them to catch such a *miraculous Draught* of Fishes. At another Time, he eat and drank with them, and gave them some principal *Points of Instruction*; and when they met together to pray, *he stood in the midst of them*. He talked with some of them as they went

went to *Emaus*. And, at another Time, he complied with the *doubtful Temper of Thomas*, and suffered him to *view his crucified Body*, and to *thrust his Hands into his Side*. At another Time, he was seen of the *five hundred Brethren* mentioned by St. *Paul*, besides the amazing *Wonder* of his *Ascension*, which was seen by all the Apostles. Now all these Times, here mentioned, were within *forty Days* after his Resurrection ; so that, if he appeared at no other Time but what is in *Scripture* recorded, you cannot say *he was shy of his Conversation*, to be in the Disciples Company so often in so short a Time. Which makes St. *Luke* say plainly, *That he was seen of them forty Days*, Acts i. 3. But I cannot imagine what Trick you can fancy in this ; you have no Grounds to imagine, that any of the Apostles set up a *supposition* Christ, which they were afraid of having too narrowly viewed ; for that strict Examination he underwent of his Hands and Sides, does for ever *confute* such a Fancy ; and the Disciples, by *once or twice* Conversing with him, were as sure it was he, as if they had seen him an hundred Times.

But, supposing our Saviour did not so often converse with his Disciples and others, as he did before ; There was a very good Reason for it. Before his *Death*, he was upon his *prophetick Office*, when he was obliged to teach the World the *excellent Morality of his Institution*, to make known the *Will of God in relation to the Mediatorship of the Messias*, and to exhibit in himself the most *shining Example which ever came into the World*. But, after his Resurrection this Work was over ; and it was not reasonable, that the *eternal Son of God* should converse with Mankind more than *absolute Necessity*, or the Reason of Things, required.

Nay, Who can tell, but that one Reason, why our Saviour did not appear so publickly, among all Sorts of Persons, as he did before, was, because by this he would shew an *eminent Example* of God's Vengeance upon the wicked *Jews*, by giving them occasion to be hardened in their *Infidelity*, till God, *in his good Time*, should be pleased to open their *Eyes and Hearts*, that they, as well as others,

others, might see and feel the *Light* and *Comfort* of the *Gospel*. For if our Saviour had appeared every Day in the Sight of his Crucifiers, they would have been forced, whether they would or no, to have believed in him : But God Almighty did not see Reason, to afford so great Blessings to such ill-disposed, malicious, and ungrateful Men.

And there may be another Reason, for our Saviour's sequestring himself, more than ordinary, from the Conversation of this World ; because, though his *Humanity* was not perfectly glorified, yet, by having his Soul separated for a Time from the Body, and by having partaken of the Joys of Paradise, his human Nature must be considerably weaned from the Things of this Life, and, being now more let into the spiritual World, he would be more desirous of that heavenly Conversation than before. He conversed with his Disciples and Followers, as much as was requisite to strengthen their Faith, and to do them good ; but was obliged to associate, at other Times, with those blessed Inhabitants of the intellectual World, to which he was, since his Resurrection, more nearly allied.

Phil. Well ! supposing all this true, yet the Heathens themselves have as much to say, for their Philosopher *Apollonius Tyanaeus*. For the Gods, in a Dream, admonished the Mother of the Birth of this great Infant ; and when he was born, a Flash of Lightning fell down from the Heaven to the Earth¹. He, as well as Christ, broke off the Familiarity which one had with a *Demon*². He raised a young Maid, at *Rome*, from Death to Life³. Being bound in Fetters, he shook them off at his Pleasure⁴. And being to answer an Accusation before *Domitian*, vanished out of his Sight⁵. He, as well as the Apostles, had, by Inspiration, the Gift of all Tongues⁶. And, what is the most surprising Miracle of all, and equal to any you pretend of Christ, after he was dead, he 'rose to life again, and taught the Rules of his Philosophy⁷.

¹ *Philostrati Hist.* lib. i. cap. 4. ² *Id. lib. 4. cap. 8.* ³ *Id. lib. 4.*
cap. 10. ⁴ *Id. lib. 7. cap. 10.* ⁵ *Id. lib. 8. cap. 12.* ⁶ *Id. lib. 1.*
cap. 13. ⁷ *Id. lib. 8. cap. 13.*

Indeed, for my Part, I am inclined to believe all Miracles alike ; but if you are to be guided by these for the Truth of Opinions, why is not *Apollonius's* Philosophy as well attested, as the Religion of Christ ? Besides, as *Hierocles* observes, the wonderful Actions of this great Philosopher, are not related, like those of Christ, by such obscure Men as *Peter* and *Paul*, but by learned Men and Philosophers, as *Damis*, *Maximus*, and *Philostratus*. The like miraculous Power was in *Abaris*, another Pythagorick Philosopher, who used to fly through the Air upon a winged Arrow ; and yet, as *Celsus* says *, *He was not for this reputed as a God.*

Cred. It is but a vain Cavil, and the poor Refuge of a routed Argument, to compare the Character of *Apollonius* with that of our blessed Lord ; between which two Persons, there is as wide a Difference as there is between the History of *Julius Cæsar* and that of *Guy of Warwick*. For the History of the Actions of Christ, were written by Men who either conversed with, or lived at the same Time with him, and all of them to a Tittle agree in the most material Passages of his Life. But *Apollonius's* History is owing to *Philostratus*, a Man who lived more than a hundred Years after him, and pretends he had his Memoirs from the Talk of the People in the Cities where *Apollonius* had conversed ; which must needs be very imperfect Stories, when they had been handed about by Hear-say for so many Years. The Actions of Christ were written by the Apostles, who laid down their Lives for the Truth ; but *Philostratus* ventured nothing for the Writing his History, but was greatly encouraged to write some strange Stories of the Philosophers, by the Empress *Julia*. For she was a philosophick *Lady*, who had always a great Number of Rhetors, Sophists, and Philosophers about her, and therefore was glad to hear the Account of the Lives and Studies of such famous Men, as she admired. Indeed, *Philostratus* says, *That a great Deal of Apollonius's Life was taken from the Commentaries of Damis, the Companion of Apollonius, which he himself had never published, but some*

* Apud Orig. lib. 3.

Body had communicated to the Empress ; so that 'tis probable that That Book was a Forgery too, because it was never heard of before that Time, which containing such remarkable Stories, 'tis almost impossible it should not. And as for this *Damis*, according to the Character *Philostratus* gives of him, *he was a Man of very little Judgment*, as appears all along in his Disputes with *Apollonius*. But 'tis plain, by a transitory View of this History, that it was compiled only to shew the Reading and Learning of the Author, and rather to give Descriptions of the Places and Customs of the People, with whom *Apollonius* conversed, than to write the Actions of that *Philosopher*. He runs off in every Page to Things perfectly foreign to the Busines of *Apollonius*, and is for edging in all the fine Stories, he ever met with among the *Geographers* and *Naturalists*; as is plain, by his Talking so much of the *Armenian Panthers*, Elephants, *Phœnixes*, Griffins, and Satyrs. There are in it several foolish poetical Stories of *Tantalus*, *Hercules*, *Prometheus*, and *Mnemon*; many ridiculous Forgeries of the *Bramins* keeping Tubs of Rain and Thunder by them; of the Earth's swelling, just like the Waves of the Sea, by the Motion of a *Bramin's Wand*; and one of a magical Feast, where the Tables and Chairs, Meat and Drink, came in, of their own Accord, into the Entertainment.

In other Places, there is more legendary Stuff, of Apes as large as a Man; of other Beasts, with a Man's Head and a Lion's Body; of Wool growing out of the Ground, like Grass; and of Women, half whose Bodies were white, and the other half black; of *Apollonius*'s understanding the *Language of Birds*, and *Beasts*; of his *Feeding upon Dragon's Hearts*; Dragons, which in that Place were so numerous, that the Inhabitants hunted them, as we do Hares.

Now though those *Stories* might pass off well enough, in *Philostratus's Time*, when *Geography* was but little understood; yet the *Observation* of *Modern Travellers*, has proved all these Relations to be ridiculous Lies; and therefore the other *Stories*, which he tells of his *Philosopher*,

pher, do not deserve more Credit. But above all, you may observe the *inconsistency* of the *Author*, who, when he allows *Apollonius* the *Miraculous Gift of Tongues*, not long after forgets himself, and makes him stand in need of an *Interpreter* to Talk to *Phraotes*. And, as for the Miracles he is reported to have done, they are all idle inconsistent Tales, which are sufficiently exposed by *Eusebius*, in his Answer to *Hierocles's Philalethe*. It would be endless to make all the Remarks, that might be made upon the Lies and Inconsistencies of this silly *Author*; and perhaps, if Mr. *Blount* had translated the whole History, as he has done the two First Books for the use of the *Infidels*, he had done us no great Mischief; for the Follies of this affected *Romance*, compared with the plain History of the *New Testament*, demonstrate, to all sensible Men, how those Writings, though composed by unlearned Men, do infinitely surpass the *Composition* of this Book-read *Philosopher*. For, granting the *Gospel* only a *Romance*; the *Apostles*, in Writing it, have given, Ten times a better Picture of a *Philosophick Mind*, in the History of *Jesus Christ*, than *Philostratus* has given in the wretched Pedantick Character of *Apollonius*.

*Philostratus set
on to forge
his History.*

But 'tis plain that *Philostratus* either undertook, or was put upon Writing this History, to confront the Miracles of our Blessed Lord. The Heathen of that Age perceived the quick Growth of *Christianity*, and the incontestable *Proof* of the Miracles of Christ and his *Apostles*, which brought so many over to that Faith; and therefore the best Way they had, for the Support of their *Superstition*, was to trump up a *Philosopher*, who did as many Miracles for the Support of *Paganism*, as Christ had done for those of the *Gospel*. So that, by this Fraud, they got an *Apollonius* to compare with the Miracles, and a *Sanchoniathon* with the Antiquity of the Bible. But the mishap was, *Philostratus* could not play his Game so cunningly as *Philo Biblius* did. For his *Romantick Tales*, which every Traveller can *disprove*, betray the Cheat, as also the Affectation of coining Miracles so just'y parallel to those of our *Saviour*, he seeming to have had the *Gospel* lying before him, when he wrote his Book;

He

He found there our *Saviour* to be called the *Son of God*, and therefore he makes his *Philosophick Hero* to be reputed the *Son of Jupiter*. And the cunning *Sophist* thought it a mighty Fetch, that he would not stile him the Son of *Apollo* or *Neptune*, because that would be to render him less than Jesus Christ, who was reputed the *Son of the most High God*, and therefore he chuses *Jupiter* above all others to entitle him to. But then, because the *Jews* and *Heathens* usually blamed our *Saviour* for pretending to the *Divine Nature*, or to be the *Son of God*; therefore our *Sophist's Hero* must be so modest, as to refuse this great Title, which the *Inhabitants of Tyana* gave him, and own himself only to be *Apollonius's Son*. He finds in the *Gospel*, that *Christ* cured several *Demoniacks*, and therefore *Apollonius* must break off the *Correspondence* and *Congress* which a Man frequently had with a *Lamia*, and by good *Counsel* dehort him from such a wicked *Consuetude*. And that the Author of this *Story* had an Eye upon the *Gospel* is evident, from the *ingenious Remark* of *Huetius*, who observes that *Philostratus* uses the very words of St. *Luke*, chap. viii. 28. speaking of the Devil which our *Saviour* cast out. Upon these words of *Apollonius*, says *Philostratus*, *The Spirit was like to one that wept*, καὶ ἐδίπλω μὲν βασανίζειν αὐτὸν, and beseeched him not to torment it; which is the same which the wicked Spirit in *Scriptures* cries out, Σέουαι σε μὲν βασανίζειν. I beseech thee torment me not. Now any one who considers the great *Latitude of Expression* in the *Greek Tongue*, and the peculiar *Phraseology* of the *New Testament*, can hardly think *Philostratus* lighted upon this Expression by chance.

From the same History of this *Demoniack* in the *Gospel*, he borrows his Fable of the young Man of *Corcyra*, who was possessed by a Spirit. The Devil which was in the *Gadarene* of the *Gospel*, after he was gone out of the Man, had a License to enter into the Herd of Swine: And so *Apollonius* is made to command the Spirit, when it left the *Corcyrean*, to tumble down a Statue. And I doubt not, but, upon the same Account, *Apollonius* is feigned to raise up the Maid at *Rome*, almost in the

same Manner which our Saviour did fairus's Daughter. And because our Saviour shew'd a magnanimous Contempt of Death, by resolving to go to Jerusalem, where he was sure to be betray'd, and from which some of his Disciples dissuaded him; therefore Apollonius must not come behind-hand in that Bra cry neither, but Demetrius must tell him, how dangerous it was to come to Rome, for fear of Domitian, who was noted for his ill Treatment of Philosophers; and then, after this Debortation, he is made courageously to resolve upon it. The like foolish Affectation of a Parity with Christ, was the Occasion of the Fable of this Man's appearing after Death, which was only to a young Man, who had long watched, and prayed to Apollonius, That he would appear to him, and give him Satisfaction concerning the Immortality of the Soul, after which he fell asleep, and on a sudden cries out, I believe thee, O Tyaneus. And when his Company asked him what he meant by this. Oh! says he, Do you not see Apollonius? And when they said No, but they would give any thing to see him: he replied, He appeared to me for his Satisfaction, being invisible to others, and so goes on to tell them what Apollonius said of a future State. And this is the Substance of the History of this Man of Straw, which the Heathens thought fit to set up against our Blessed Saviour; but how filly the Imposture looks, and how wretched the Parallel is, I leave any one to judge, who will give himself the Pains to read Philostratus's Book. But I cannot but wonder at the Partiality of some of you Deists, to make such a Stir in crying up this History of Philostratus, and running down the Scriptures, when, I am sure, you would never let us be quiet, if you could find in the Gospel such strange Stories of Magical Feasts, of Griffins, Dragons, &c. as you do in him.

Apollonius
in good
humour.

But I pray, Sir, with what Confidence, can you compare a Man, whom you can't call a good Man, with Jesus Christ, whose Life was a Pattern of unspotted Purity? Apollonius can never be excused, for spending so many Years in an idle vagrant Life; but what can you say

say in behalf of his *common Swearing*, it being his usage to swear by *Jupiter*, at all turns? Or how can you excuse him from *Idolatry* in Sacrificing to the Sun? And where was his Justice in adjudging another Man's Possession to his Adversary, because he was a wiser Man, and a more devout Worshiper of the Gods? *Phil. lib. 2. cap. 15.*

As for the Argument of *Hierocles*, who asserts, *That Apostles the Gospel is less to be believed than this History, because this more credible was wrote by learned Men, but that by illiterate Men and Jugglers.* I say, that it is only a *malicious Cavil*, for we defy the whole Tribe of *Infidels* to find any Juggle in the *Gospel History*; a Book, which is full of plain unaffected Relations of *Matter of Fact*. But any body, but who can digest Sir *John Mandevil's Travels*, or *Orlando Furioso*, will be sick of *Philostratus*. And I must farther add, that this *Moralist* is very much out in his *Logick* to say, *That an History is at all the more questionable, because it was wrote by a plain illiterate Man.* For if it had been wrote by a Man of Letters, by a cunning *Sophist*, who had been used to counterfeit Stiles, to feign Letters and Speeches, and to make *Epopopæia's*; a Man might be apt to suspect that all was forged by the Wit of this *Scholar*, who could make all the Parts of a *Romance* hang together, and look like a true *History*; but no reasonable Man can suspect such a Fraud to be plaid successfully, by uneducated *Publicans* or *Fishermen*.

And Lastly, as for the Story of *Abaris* which you mention, it is one of the *Pythagorick Τερατολογίαι*, or wonderful Tales, which that *Seet*, as we observed before, above all others, were fond of; and is altogether as ridiculous as our common People's Talk of Witches riding upon Broomsticks.

When *Celsus* compares *Abaris* with *Christ*, *Origen* asks the question, *What was Mankind benefited by Abaris's riding upon an Arrow?* It was not worth the while, that Omnipotence should exert it self, for such an idle Miracle. But when (says he) we say our *Jesus* was taken up into Glory, I see an Institution of Religion, the Author of which God Al-

mighty by his Miracles does recommend; that Men contending for this, not as for human Disciplines, but as for a Divine Doctrine, they may dedicate themselves to God over all, and do all things to please him.

Phil. Having now done with the Life and Actions of Christ, I beg leave to speak a Word or two of his Apostles *. For my part, I am not satisfied of the Sincerity of their proceedings, and I'm apt to suspect, that they put a Trick upon the World in coining a number of strange Stories to amuse Mankind, the better to make the Doctrine they preached to be believed. There is a great Itch in Mankind after Applause and Admiration; and I doubt not, but that these Men were set mightily agog to be Ringleaders of a new Sect; and when they found the People so very forward to believe what they said, they would be sure not to be wanting in Variety of strange Tales to impose upon their Credulity. And this I take to be a fair Account of many of those repeated Miracles, which they vouched, to support the Doctrine of their Master.

The Apostles not Counterfeits.

Cred. You call in question the Truth of Matters of Fact, which passed above 1600 Years ago, which to be sure were examined when they were first reported; which were acquiesced in by unprejudic'd Men; and the Belief of which great Part of the World have stood in Possession of, ever since. It is usually a difficult thing, to prove Matters of Fact of so long standing; and 'tis hardly ingenuous to desire the Proof of what was well look'd into at first, and has so long a time been unquestioned. Suppose your Great-Grandfather had lost an Estate by a Suit of Law in Queen *Elizabeth's* Time, thro' the positive unexceptionable Evidence of his Adversary's Witnesses, and that none of your Family had ever questioned the Possessor's Title since; Do you think it fair for you, now to arraign the Integrity of those Witnesses, which your Predecessors, at that Time, were better able, and altogether as willing to do, if they had any Pretence for

* *Coloss apud Origen.* lib. 1. *Judeus apud Limborch* in disput. cum *Erucl. Jud.* p. 133. *Blount's Notes on Philost.* p. 28.

it? If the Apostles had been such Cheats as you imagine, how come People, so long after, to discover the Imposture; which the *Jews* and *Heathens*, who lived at the same Time with them, were not able to do? If this were so, how comes it to pass, that they, who had such advantageous Opportunities to examine into the Matters of Fact, do believe such lying Stories; and that such a late Progeny of Mankind should be so lucky, to find out the Cheat? But because the incredulous may receive all possible Satisfaction, which the most obstinate and unreasonable of them may require; let us consider, what Satisfaction a Man can possibly require, of the Certainty of Matters of Fact done so long ago, in Relation to the Reporters of them. I know the usual Way is, to have recourse to unexceptionable History of the Time, when they were said to be done; but because I shall have occasion to prove the Authority of the *Holy Scriptures* hereafter; I shall waive that now, and only speak of the first great Witnesses of the Christian Religion, and the Credibility of what they attested.

If a Man was to lay his thoughts together, and pensively to consider, what he would desire in order to his Satisfaction, That the Witnesses of *Matters of Fact* so long ago spoke true; he could not desire more than this: That the Men, who reported those Things, were such *good honest Men*, that they would not tell a solemn Lie; that they were Men of Understanding enough, to know the full Truth of the Things they related; that they had not Learning or Cunning enough to frame an intricate *Imposture*; that they were of such a Number, that they could not all be *deceived*, and their Agreement in their Reports such, that they could not be *Deceivers*; that they should receive no Advantage by their Relation; that the Time and Place, where they said this was done, were easily to be examined into; And lastly, That they did constantly persist in what they said, so as to be willing to suffer, or die, for the Truth of it. A Man would be very *unreasonable* to require half these *Qualifications*, for every *Testimony* he assents to; but where

they are all found, a Man must be a *Sceptick*, who does not give his assent to a Matter, so attested. Now the *Apostles* have all these *Qualifications* in the *Testimony* they give of our *Saviour's Doctrine and Miracles*.

*Because
Good Men.*

1. They appear to be honest and good Men. Their main Design was, To persuade Men to lead good and holy *Lives*; To teach them to leave off *Idolatry and Polytheism*, and to serve the One and True God; not to place their *Holiness* in *ceremonious Actions*, but in *Acts of Piety and Charity*. And, in the whole Course of their Lives, they were never taxed with any remarkable Wickedness; but contrariwise, they were noted for being eminently Exemplary for *Devotion, Mortification, and Self-Denial*. Now why should not the *Testimony* of such Men be believed? What though the Matter they relate be very strange and unusual, as that our *Saviour did such wondrous Miracles in Confirmation of his Doctrines, and rose again from the Dead*? Yet it is more incredible, that so many *honest and good Men* should, on a sudden, abandon all Shame and Honesty, and turn Liars and Cheats.

*Because
they knew
the matters
they relat-
ed.*

2. The *Apostles* were very good Judges of the *Matters* they reported, and were sure they understood them so well, that they could not be deceived in them. If they had related Things which they did not understand, their *Testimony* was not to be valued. Indeed, if some ordinary *Mechanicks* were to make Report of the *Observations* of a Learned Mathematician, they might, by Mistake, represent an *Astronomer* for a *Conjuror*; because *Mechanicks* was a Thing as much above their Understanding as *Necromancy*. But such *Mechanicks* were as good Judges of what they heard, or felt, or saw, as the best *Philosopher* in the World. They saw dead Men raised to Life, blind Men have their Eyes, and lame Men have their Limbs restored them; they, several times, saw and handled Christ after his Resurrection, and viewed him when he was caught up into *Heaven*. These were *Matters of Fact*, which required no great Capacities to be Judges of the Truth of; and if Men had but their *Senses* and *common Understandings*, it was enough.

3. Neither had the Apostles Learning and Cunning enough, ^{Because not} _{Cunning e-}
 to carry on such an intricate Imposture of so many Parts, ^{enough to} _{such a}
 this must consist of. It required a greater Compass of Under-^{carry on}
 standing to frame such an excellent System of Morality, to give such an extraordinary Account of the Satisfaction for the Sin, and of the Nature and Office of a Mediator; to feign the Life and Actions of a ~~messias~~, which should so exactly correspond with the old Prophecies, and the Types, and Prefigurations of the Mosaical Law; to suit such Rewards and Punishments in another Life, which should be so agreeable to Reason, and so worthy of God. Such poor illiterate Men, were no more able to contrive such a wise and noble Institution, than they were to frame a World. The Actions of our Saviour are so various, and so depending one upon another; there is such a Correspondence between his Prophetick, Priestly and Kingly Office, that it is not in the Power of the Wit and Learning of Man, to draw up such a rational Scheme of a Mediatorship; much less could it be done by those unlettered Men, who first preached and attested these things.

4. There might be some Exception against the Testimony of the Apostles, if there had been but one or two Wits of all Wits of ^{all} _{sed the} _{same.}
 what they declar'd. Suppose a cunning Man might deceive one or two simple ones, or their own Fancy might impose upon them; and that the same might possibly lay their Heads together to attest a Falsity, and make the Parts of it hang pretty well together, Yet this is impossible to be supposed in such a Number, as attested the Miracles and Doctrine of Christ. He had *Twelve* chosen Disciples, who preached the *Gospel* throughout all the *World*, in the same uniform Way; so that all these could never have agreed upon a *Cheat*, and have carried it on after the same Manner. 'Tis hard to get so many into such an ill Design; but 'tis yet harder to suppose, that none of them all should vary in the Relation of the Falsity. Some of them would certainly have been found clashing in their telling such a long sham Story, which the cunningest Man could hardly have told twice the same way. But these

were not all the *Witnesses* of the *Truth* of the *Gospel*: There were many Thousands of his *Auditors* which heard him *preach*, and saw his *Miracles*, and five hundred Men at once saw him alive after his *Crucifixion*. Now 'tis impossible that so many Men should all be deceived, or that they should combine together in a *Cheat*, to impose upon the *World*.

*Because
they got
nothing by
it.*

5. When a *Witness* has any *Interest* to carry on, by a strange *Relation*, there may be some *Grounds* to suspect his *Veracity*; but when Men could get nothing by it, as was the Case of the *Apostles*, what *Reason* is there why they should not be believed? Indeed, if they could have got more Money by *Preaching* than by *Fishing*, there was then some *Ground* to suspect the *Truth* of what they said; but they, poor Men! got nothing by all their *Trouble* and *Fatigue* of their *Ministry*, and lived in as mean a Condition, as they did before. If they had consider'd their *Interest* and *Ease*, they would have follow'd their *Manual Occupations* still, which had more Profit attending them, and less Trouble and Danger. If they had a Mind to be Rich or Great, they would have curried Favour with the *Jews* or *Romans*, who had the Command of the *Wealth* and *Honour* of that Place; but they would never have applied themselves to the common People, who were so far from being able to better the Condition of the *Apostles*, that, for the most part, they were hardly able to subsist themselves.

*Because the
Truth of
what they
said was
easily exa-
mined.*

6. If a *Witness*, who told a strange Story, had laid the *Scene* of the *Action* many Hundreds of Miles off, in some unfrequented Part of the *World*, as *Philostratus* does many of his Stories in the *East-Indies*; or if he had told a hear-say Tale done out of the Memory of Man, there would be good *Reason* to distrust his Evidence. But when the *Apostles* attest *Matters of Fact*, done in the same City, wherein they gave their Evidence, and some of which (as particularly *Christ's Resurrection*) they say happen'd but a few Months before, this looks natural and free; especially when the Men they declared it to, had the Opportunity of examining into, and satisfying themselves concerning it.

it. But if they had made the Story, they would have been Mad-men to have laid the Scene of it so nigh home, and, said it was so lately done, or assign'd so small a Space of Time since it was done ; thereby manifestly exposing the Cheat to unavoidable Discovery, and themselves to the Disgrace and Punishment so bold an Imposture deserv'd.

7. There are indeed some Men in the World, who will not stick to tell a strange Lie, it may be several Times over, as long as they are to lose nothing by it ; but if this be like to bring them into any Trouble, they then fall to mincing and palliating the Matter ; or, if they can get off no other Way, will own they did not speak True. For it cannot be supposed, that any Liar has that Regard to the Reputation of speaking Truth, as to venture any Hazard for it. Then how can it ever be supposed, that the *Apostles* should lay down their Lives, in Defence of an idle *Story* they had made ? They might tell indeed such a strange Tale, of a Man that rose from the Dead, and ascended into Heaven, out of Vanity, when they saw People pleased with the Strangeness of the Relation, and admired them for it ; but this could last no longer than they could do it with *Impunity*. The *Banter* would be spoiled when they came before the *Sanhedrin* or *Judges*, where nothing but *Death* was to be expected from those, who persisted in a *religious Imposture*. Well, but you may say, *that they, having often told a Lie, rather than undergo the shame of Retracting it, would suffer any Thing for it.* This is altogether as *miraculous*, if it were true, as those *Miracles* they vouched ; for such a thing was never known in Nature. A Man that has the *Baseness* to tell a solemn *Lie*, can never have the *Courage to die* for it. We have a Multitude of Instances of *Cheats*, when they have been brought into Danger, discovering themselves, and flying to Mercy ; but I defy you to give an Instance of any Man who died for a *Fraud*, when he might have been sav'd for *detecting* it. Or if it was possible, that such a *vain-glorious Coxcomb* could be found once in an Age, you cannot suppose, that all the *first Propagators of Christianity* were such. Put your self, *Philologus*, in the *Apostles Places*, or any other

*Because
they suf-
fered and
died for
their Doc-
trine.*

Gentlemen, if you will, of a generous Education, who have a greater Sense of Honour than these poor Men could be supposed to have, and set Death before you on one Side, and the Recantation of an idle Story on the other, and think, if you could think fit to die to carry on the Banter, and would not chuse rather to be laughed at, than to be a Martyr for a foolish Tale. Now if Men of Honour would do a thing, which would be such a Mortification to them, rather than lose their Lives; what unheard-of Spark of Honour can you suppose to find in the Breasts of those plain Fisher-men, that should make them rather die, than to say any Thing contrary to what they had preached?

Phil. Good Sir, you run on a little too fast in behalf of the Apostles; for give me leave to tell you, that their Preaching was not so void of Gain, nor so full of Hazard, as you pretend. If they got nothing by their new Doctrine, they had nothing to lose. And it was an ample Reward to poor Fisher-men, to be look'd on as inspired Men, and to have all their Followers submit themselves to them. * Peter, 'tis true, left his torn Nets, his leaky Boat, and simple Companions; but by being an Apostle, his Words were admired as Oracles, and he sat at the Helm in religious Matters. And to be sure, where-ever the Apostles went, there was good Chear provided for them. Besides, there were Gatherings in the new-planted Churches, 2 Cor. viii. and there is no Doubt to be made, but the Apostles had their Share in these; and St. Paul seems to put in plainly for it, alleging that Passage of the Law, *Thou shalt not muzzle the Mouth of the Ox that treadeth out the Corn.* Nay, there must be considerable Sums of Money at the Apostles disposing; for in the *Acts of the Apostles* it is said, *That the Believers sold all that they had, and laid the Price at the Apostles Feet.* Now all this was Honour and Profit enough for such Men as these: It was no great Riches indeed, but it was a comfortable Maintenance. And how many Men are there, that venture their Necks every Day for as little? Besides, I don't see what great Danger they in-

* Judeus apud Limb. p. 133, &c 134.

curred, by their *Preaching*. The greatest Danger was from the *Jews*, who had Laws against such *Impostures*, and therefore they very wisely turned to the *Gentiles*. And among them there was little Danger, as they ordered Matters; for they only preached Jesus Christ to be the *Son of God*, and that there was a *Resurrection*, and the like, which were Things that might go down well enough with the *Heathen World*; but I don't find them any-where in the *New Testament* preaching against *Idolatry*, which if they had done, the zealous *Heathens* would have immediately crucified them. And 'twas upon this Account, that the Apostles inveigh so much against the *false Brethren*, who were those that betray'd them to the *Heathens*, that they run down *Idolatry* in private. Besides, it does not appear, but that they did *avoid Suffering* as much as they could; for when St. Paul was called in question for teaching contrary to the Law of *Moses*, he with a great Deal of *Dexterity* avoids the Charge, pretending only *that* for the *Resurrection of the Dead*, and for seeing a *Vision* he was called in question, which, though they were not the *Points* he was charged with, yet they served to set the *Pharisees* and *Sadducees* a quarrelling, and so freed him from Danger, that Time, by that ingenious *Prevarication*.

Cred. I will speak in order to the *Objections* you have here raised. You say the Apostles had *nothing to lose*, and therefore they might venture upon the *Preaching the Gospel*. What though they had no *Riches* to venture, they had the *Reputation of honest Men*, which few People will care to lose for the sake of an *Imposture*; for an *honest Man*, if ever so poor, would not care to be counted a *Cheat*. And if they had no *Reputation*, they had their *Liberty* and *Lives* to lose, and no one, of any Sense, would care to venture these, upon no better a Prospect than you can suppose the Apostles to have had, for *Goals and Ga'ows*.

But you say, They got *Victuals by it*, and the *Honour of being the Heads of a religious Party*, and the *Disposal of the People's Alms*. An i, w'ld, wondrous Matters are all these, to make Men venture their Necks for them. It does not appear, but that they lived as well upon their *Trade*,

Apostles ventured their Lives and Liberties.

And did not preach for vain Glory or Applause.

Trade, as this comes to. But supposing they preached only for a *Livelihood*, yet, was it worth While, for them to undergo so much Pains and Danger, for a little Victuals? See the great Comforts of the Apostleship, which did, as you say, invite Men to it upon Account of Gain. They endured *Tribulation, Distress, Persecution, Famine and Nakedness, Peril and Sword*, Rom. viii. 35. They were made a *Spectacle to the World, to Angels and Men*, and were Fools for Christ's sake; they were *Hungry and Thirsty, Naked and Buffeted, and had no certain Dwelling-place*. St. Paul was five Times whipped by the Jews, three Times beaten with Rods, once stoned, and frequent in Prisons, &c. 2 Cor. xi. and got his own Livelihood by his own Hands, though he had a more liberal Education. But suppose, they had got their Victuals *gratis*, what Proportion do all these Troubles and Torments bear, to such a small Conveniency?

Had nothing by the Collections.

But it is an *uncharitable Falsity* to say, The Apostles gained any Thing by the Collections which were made. The Contributions, which were first made, were laid down before the Apostles; but what Advantage did they make of them, but only to relieve the Poor? If the Apostles indirectly had reaped any Profit from these, they would have kept them still in their own Hands; but they instituted the Office of *Deacons* to discharge that Trust, which they would never have done, if they had preached the Gospel for the Sake of the Advantage they *made* by such *Contributions*. And the *Collections* mention'd by St. Paul, 2 Cor. viii. were only for Relieving the Poor at *Hierusalem* in a great Famine, which were entirely sent thither without the Apostles participating of any Part of them. And St. Paul was so far from asking any Share of them, that he declares that he was *burthensome* to none; that he got his Living by his own Hands; and that he preached the Gospel *gratis*, though, if he pleased, he might in Justice demand a Livelihood for it. *They that wait at the Altar, are Partakers with the Altar; even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel. But I have used none of these Things. Neither have*

have I written these Things that it should be so done unto me: For it were better for me to die, than that any Man should make my Glorying void. And so again, What is my Reward then? Verily that when I preach the Gospel, I may make the Gospel of Christ without Charge, that I abuse not my Power in the Gospel, 1 Cor. ix. 14. And again, When I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no Man, 2 Cor. xi. 9. And Acts vii. 14. Ye yourselves know, that these Hands have ministered unto my Necessities.

Neither is it true what you say, that they were in no Danger by Preaching to the *Gentiles*. The Reason, why so many of the Apostles left the *Jews* to preach to the *Gentiles*, was not to avoid Persecution, but not to lose their Time and Preaching among the stubborn and hardened *Jews*, who undervalued their Doctrine, and trampled upon the holy Things. Nay, the Apostles were so far from being willing, upon this Account, to go to preach among the *Gentiles*, that they were brought with great Reluctancy to leave the persecuting *Jews*, to preach to the *Heathens*. And as for Persecution, they had as large Share of it in the *Heathen Countries*, as in *Judea* it self. The Epistles which the Apostles wrote to comfort the *Gentile Believers* under their Persecutions, and to exhort them courageously to undergo their Sufferings, do clearly demonstrate, that they were persecuted, as well by those of their own Country, as by the *Jews*. For St. Paul writes to the *Thessalonians*, *Ye have also suffered like Things of your own Countrymen, as they have of the Jews, who killed the Lord Jesus*, 1 Thess. ii. 14. And, in the other Epistles to the *Gentile Converts*, there are many Exhortations to Constancy in their Tribulations, which they underwent from the *Heathens* in those Places, where the *Jews* could not hurt them.

But I see no Reason in the World, why you should say, That the Apostles did not preach against the *Heathen Idolatry*; for their bare Teaching the Principles of the *Christian Religion*, is a manifest Confutation of the Worship of Idols. This was the first Step, which was made towards

*Persecuted
by Gentiles,
as well as
by Jews.*

*Preached
against the
Heathen
Idolatry.*

towards Christianity, as the Apostle says, *1 Thess. i. 9.*
That you being turned from Idols, might serve the living God.
 Paul and Barabas at Lystra, tell the People, *That they preach unto them, that they should turn from Vanities, or Idols, unto the living God,* *Acts xiv. 15.* St. Paul at Athens shews them the Vanity of Idol-worship, from a Saying of the Poet *Aratus.* And 'twas his Preaching against this, that made *Demetrius* the Silversmith, and the superstitious Multitude at *Ephesus*, in such a Rage with him, *Acts xix.* To which, if you add all the many Exhortations against Idolatry, in every Page of the Apostolick Epistles, a Man can hardly be thought to have look'd into the New Testament, who does deny this Truth.

False Brethren not Informers.

And 'tis a great Sign you are not sufficiently conversant in your Bible, that you take the *false Brethren* sometimes spoken of, for Informers against the *Christians*, upon Account of their condemning Idolatry. For the *false Brethren* were those, who would persuade the *Gentiles* to take upon them the troublesome Ceremonies of the *Mosaical Law*; and those, who would pretend to be *Jews* to avoid Persecution, which lay only upon the *Christians*; and this you will be sufficiently satisfied of, if you read the 2d and 4th Chapters of the Epistle to the *Galatians.*

What St. Paul said to the Pharisees no Prevarication.

As for the Evasion and Prevarication, which you tax St. Paul with; the Charge is very unjust. For St. Paul did nothing blame-worthy in this. If he had denied himself to be a *Christian*, it had been something. But he only said he was judged for the Resurrection of the Dead, which was the most principal Doctrine of the *Christian Religion.* And indeed I do not see, what more proper Argument he could use, to convince the *Pharisees* of their Fault in persecuting the *Christians*, than to shew, That they themselves did hold one of the prime Doctrines of their Faith. You cannot think, that St. Paul by this should make himself no *Christian*; he was too well known among them, for his deserting their Interest, to make this

this pass upon them. I believe he declined their Malice and Rage against him at that Time, by declaring this Doctrine of Christianity before them, which set his Enemies upon an eager Dispute, and engaged the *Pharisees* on his Side ; which was warrantable enough ; for if by the Interest of the *Pharisees* in holding this Point in common with them, he could make himself Friends, I see no Reason why he should decline it.

Phil. But supposing the * Truth of these Miracles to be pretty well attested, yet the *Popish* ones have as strenuous Vouchers for them too ; and yet they are believed by none, but the Bigots of that Religion.

Cred. There is a great Deal of difference between the *Popish* Miracles, and those of Christ and the Apostles. In those Times when the *Popish* Miracles were mostly pretended, and in those Places where they are now chiefly said to be done, Bigotry and Superstition universally prevail. The Miracles are done privately, before a few Witnesses, whose Interest it is to have them believed, and who have that Power in the Government, that any Man shall be undone, that dares to contradict them. The simple Vulgar take their Priest's Word for the Truth of them, and the Wiser do not care to run the Risque of a Fine, or the Plagues of the Inquisition, by exposing the Cheat. But all Things were just contrary, in the Case of the Apostles. They could not divulge the Miracles they were Witnesses to, without incurring the Danger of severe Punishment. The Magistrates of that Time did not hinder Men from looking narrowly into them, whether they were Tricks or no, but would have taken it kindly from, and rewarded, any one, who could have detected the Fraud. And if there had been any, some prying officious Body or other, would most certainly have found it out, and discovered it to the Magistrates ; which would have ruined the Cause of Christianity, in the very Beginning.

Case of Apostolick and Popish Miracles different.

* *Jud. Apud. Limb.*

Phil. But before I have done with this Head of the *Lives and Actions of Christ and his Apostles*, I must tell you that all this Success of Christ and his Apostles was owing to some whimsical Doctrines of the Jewish Cab-bala, or Gematria, set about after the Captivity; when the Jews got some Notions of a *Messias* *, which we never read that they dreamt of before; because forsooth *Shilo* and *Messias* consisted of Letters which make up the same Numerals; and when they once got this Notion of a *Messias* in their Head, then would they pretend to find him in a hundred other Prophesies. And this was a very agreeable Fancy to such a miserable People as the Jews were then, to expect a great Deliverer, which they thought this King *Messias* must needs be. Hence several *Messias's* were set up, and came to nothing. But the People believing Christ to have done a great many Miracles, thought, for some Time, he must be that *Messias*. After this, his Crucifixion and Death spoil'd all, for they had no Hopes of a Deliverer that was dead. But when the Apostles testified he was alive again, their Hopes of a temporal *Messias*, are again assumed, and the Apostles themselves expected the same, as appears by their last Interrogation, *Lord, wilt thou at this Time restore the Kingdom to Israel?* And therefore, to stop the Mouths of the Jews, the first Propagators of Christianity, were forced to say, That after a while Christ was coming to reign with them in Glory, for a thousand Years, for otherways they would have doubted of his *Messias-ship*; but this mil-lenary Invention, of his coming to reign a thousand Years in Glory, salved all again. And this, *Credentius*, I take to be the Ground of the Success of Christianity.

Cred. But, because you should not run away with a great Deal of bare Assertion without any Proof, I would desire you would take Notice, That you have amassed here several Mistakes together, besides the blasphemous Consequences, you draw from them. For,

* *Oracles of Reason*, from p. 158. to p. 165.

Doctrine of
the Messias
before the
Captivity,

1. It is not true, that the Notion of a *Messias* among the *Jews*, came among them, after the Captivity. For the Doctrine of the *Messias* did obtain, through all Ages in that Church. It is the universal Opinion of the *Jews*, that all the Prophets prophesied of Christ. The Book *Sanhedrin* quotes a Saying of *R. Jochanan*, That *all the Prophets prophesied only of the Days of the Messias*. And *R. Salomon* brings a like Saying of *Mar*, That *all the Prophets did not prophesie but of the Years of Redemption, and the Days of the Messias*. And *Maimonides* in *Hilcot* says, That *he that does not believe in the Messias, and expect his coming, does not only disbelieve the Prophets, but the Law, and our Doctor Moses. For the Law bears Witness of him*. And indeed the Doctrine of the *Messias*, more or less expressly, was as old as that Nation; for *Abraham* the Founder of it, had it revealed to him, That *in his Seed should all the Nations of the Earth be Blessed*; which the *Jews* took always as a Promise of the *Messias*, or some great Gouvernor or Benefactor to Mankind; as is plain by that of the Apostle, *To Abraham were the Promises made*, Gal. iii. 16. And so several Places in the *Psalms* are spoken of the *Messias*, or there is no Sense to be made of them; and many other Passages in the other Prophets do evince, that the Notion of a *Messias* was as common in those Times, as under the Reign of *Herod*. I cannot say, that all along this Series of Time, this great expected Person was called by the Name of *Messias*; but these Antient Writers meant the same, as the *Jews* did afterwards, by that express Name. Nay, the Name as well as Notion seems to be fully settled, and generally to obtain in *Daniel's* Time; for he mentions the Name of the *Messias* as a Name *universally known*; from the going forth of the Commandment to build Jerusalem *unto the Messias the Prince, shall be seven Weeks*. Now if the *Messias* had not been a Name generally used to express that expected Redeemer, he would have used the same Kind of Periphrasis, as the other Prophets do.

2. Neither is it true what you assert, That the *Jewish* Net owing Cabbala, or Gematria, gave occasion to the Notion of the *Messias*. For notwithstanding the pretence of the *Jews*, to the Jewish Gematria.

to entitle their Cabbala to *Adam*, or *Moses*, or *Ezdras*, it seems to be only the Fooleries of Modern *Jews*, of which there is no Trace to be found in Antiquity. And the two Learned Men *Johannes Picus Mirandula*, and *Renechlinus*, will have the *Pythagorean* Doctrine of Numbers to proceed from That, yet they bring nothing but bare Conjecture for that Opinion. Nay, 'tis plain, that their *Gematria* is a modern Name made from the Greek Γεωμετρία, and was coined probably by the *Jews* of *Egypt*, or *Spain*, in the barbarous Ages of Christianity, when the word *Geometry* usually signified a cunning mystical Art, which no Body understood, and was next to Conjuring.

*Notion of a
Temporal
Messias did
not farther
the Gospel.*

3. And again you heap upon this another Mistake, That our *Saviour* made an Advantage to propagate his Religion, by the *Jewish* Notion of a temporal *Messias*; which is so far from being true, that if once he would have encouraged them in that fond Opinion, he might have had five times as many followers, as he had. He told them over and over, that his Kingdom was not of this World. And in the 4th of St. *John*, when our *Saviour* preached of several spiritual and mystical Things in his Kingdom; the carnal *Jews*, who had their Heads filled with other more worldly Expectations of the *Messias*, could not believe that our *Saviour* was He. *From that time many of his Disciples went back, and walked no more with him*, John vi. 66. So that this fond Opinion of the *Jews*, was so far from furthering, that it very much retarded the Progress of the *Gospel*; and if our *Saviour* had set up for a Temporal Prince, as *Mahomet* did, he might easily have drawn the whole Nation of the *Jews* after him. Nay, our *Saviour* never countenances this vulgar Notion of the *Messias* in his Disciples, as appears by his checking the Sons of *Zebedee*, when they asked for Precedency in that Kingdom. And in the Text which you urge, when they ask, *Lord, wilt thou, at this time, restore again the Kingdom to Israel?* Our *Saviour* checks them, for an impertinent Question: *It is not for you, to know the Times, and the Seasons, which the Father hath put in his own Power.* And immediately rectifies their Mistake, telling them as before,

sore, that it is not a temporal, but a spiritual Kingdom they must expect; not the Power of an earthly Crown and Scepter, but of the Holy Ghost. *But ye shall receive Power, after the Holy Ghost is come upon you.*

4. Nor did the Apostles and their Successors propagate the Notion of *Millennium*, or a thousand Years Reign of Christ upon Earth, in lieu of the former gross Opinion. For there is no Footsteps of such an Opinion, in the Apostolick Epistles; and 'tis hard to think, that St. Paul in so many Writings to several Churches, where he mentions so many antient Usages and Customs, and every Doctrine of Christianity, should perfectly omit this material one of *Millennium*. The Apostles talk of a *spiritual Body*, and *spiritual Blessings*, a *Crown of Rejoicing, and Righteousness*, and *Life, and Glory*, and a *Heavenly Kingdom*, but not a Tittle of a temporal Reign of Christ upon Earth. We hear nothing of this millenary Fancy till *Papias's* Time, who pretended to be acquainted with some of the Apostolick Men, and would have obtruded a great many odd Opinions upon the Church, among which this of *Millennium* was one. And from him *Irenaeus*, *Justin Martyr*, and others, in the latter end of the second, and the beginning of the third Century, copied it; after which, that Opinion, which was never other than one of private Doctors, seems quite lost till it was revived again by *Apollinaris*. So that this millenary Doctrine was only the Opinion of some learned Men for one Age; for other antient Writers older than *Papias*, as for Instance *Barnabas*, who is brought to countenance the *Millennium*, say nothing of it. All that can be made out of that Writer, is, That he compares the Age of the World to eight Days, six whereof it is to last, and then Men are to be judged, and afterward, *viz.* upon the eighth Day, to enter into Glory. So that you see this Millenary Doctrine is above a hundred Years too novel, and too private a Doctrine among *Christians*, to countenance your Suggestion.

*Millennium
no Aposto-
lick Doc-
rine.*



Of the Doctrines contained in the N E W
T E S T A M E N T.

Phil. I am afraid, *Credentius*, we shall hardly have time to run thro' the Doctrines of Christianity; I shall only pick out some, which I have some Exception against, and give you my Exceptions against them. And the first I shall mention is *Prayer*. For my part, I don't see any ground for this, in *Natural Religion*, or *Reason*. For why should Men pretend, to such a sawcy Familiarity with *God Almighty*, as to presume to direct him what to do? Certainly it is but *good Manners*, to let God distribute his *Favours* to us, as he shall think good, and not confidently to beg of him whatever comes into our Heads. The World is govern'd by a *wise* and *settled Providence*, which is not to be alter'd, by the *impertinent Petitions* of *vain Men*, who think their *Condition* would be *better'd* by it. And methinks Christians should be ashamed of their Fondness, when they pray for *Rain* or *fair Weather*; to think, that *God* should interpose his Power to suspend the *settled Rules* of *Nature*, and should work a *Miracle*, only to send them a *better Crop*. No, *God* is a *Good* and a *Wise Being*, who loves his *Creatures*, and knows what is best for them; and therefore the *Christian Religion* is out, when it teaches that Men should pray for *God's Blessings*, which they ought only with Modesty to wait for; and not to think to weary him out by *Importunities* to send them. That Advice of *Juvenal* is worth twenty of your *Christian Helps to Devotion*.

Si consilium vis,
Permittes ipsis expendere numinibus, quid
Conveniat nobis, rebusq; sit uile nostris:
Nam, pro iucundis, aptissima queq; dabunt Dij:
Charior est illis Homo quam sibi

*Take my Advice ; and think that human Good,
By Wiser Gods is better understood.
For Pleasure whilst we only make Request,
The kinder Deities will give what's Best.
Man's Dearer unto them than to himself, &c.*

Therefore I cannot frame my Mind to think, that Men do a pious Act in Praying to God, and spending their Time so dreamingly in Churches and their Closets, to so little Purpose as many Christians do. And as for Praise they are altogether as unreasonable ; for who can think that the All-wise Deity should take Pleasure in little Flatteries, and in hearing himself commended, when we look upon it as a Weakness in human Nature to do so, and when wise Men cannot endure it ?

Cred. Sir, You do seem not sufficiently to have considered either the Nature of Prayer or of the Christian Religion, by the Judgment you pass upon them.

i. If the Generality of good Christians spent their Times of Devotion as fillily as the Heathens, whom *Ju-
venal* reflects upon, did in praying for handsome Wives and Children, great Estates, long Life, &c. there would be some tolerable Ground for this Censure. But our blessed *Saviour*, in his Institution of Religion, has taught us how to regulate our Prayers. He tells us, we must not perform our Devotions in that hypocritical Way, which was in use among the Pharisaical *Jews*, to fall down upon their Knees *in the Corners of the Streets*, to be seen of Men : Nor to use those Battologies, or Ingeminations, so frequent among the Heathens, as *Jupiter*, *Jupiter*, *Jupiter*, *bone Jupiter*, an hundred Times together, as if the Gods were Deaf ; or, as the Man in the Comedy said to his Wife, who was full of Thanksgiving for finding her lost Daughter, *Define Deos gratulando obtundere, nisi illos tuo esse ingenio judicas, ut nil credas intelligere nisi idem dictum est centies.* What a Work you make with beating this News into the Ears of the Gods, as if the Gods were like you, to understand nothing but what is told them an hundred Times over.

These were ridiculous Notions of Prayer, which our *Saviour* has commanded his Followers to avoid; and moreover not to be positive in their Petitions, but to refer all to the good Pleasure and Wisdom of God, desiring after all, that *his Will be done.*

No Sauciness to pray to God.

2. Neither do Christians with Malepartness, or Sauciness put up their Prayers to God, but with that Modesty and Humility which becomes Creatures toward their Creator. 'Tis no Want of respect to ask my Sovereign a Request, when he has commanded me to ask him: But God Almighty has commanded us to pray to him, and to come with Boldness to the Throne of Grace; and therefore 'tis our Duty to do so. And whereas you tax our Notion of Prayer with attributing a Weakness to the Deity to be importun'd or praised, I think your Notion does the same much more. For you judge God Almighty to be like an earthly Prince, that is not to be address to by every one, by Reason of the Multiplicity of Affairs of a higher Nature, which take up most of his Time, and so is not to be disturbed by the Applications of little People, whose Suits are therefore deem'd impertinent. But, since we are sure there can be no Distraction of Thoughts, or Streightness of Time in God, we know he is as open and free to receive at all Times, a Suit from the meanest of Mankind, as from the most exalted of the Angels.

Prayer for Rain not for a Miracle.

3. Neither do Christians in their Prayers to God for Rain, Fair-weather, or any other Benefit, expect that God should miraculously disturb the Powers of Nature. God is the God of Nature, as well as of Mankind, and has promised to give us the Fruits of the Earth in their due Season, and all other needful Things to those that ask him. He sends Rains, and Droughts, and Floods, or Fair-weather, either for the Benefit or Punishment of Mankind. I grant that in the ordinary Course of Nature, such a Quantity of Water is evaporated every Day from the Sea; which Vapours when they grow so numerous and weighty, that they can no longer be suspended in the Air, fall down upon the Earth in Rains and Show-

ers,

ers : But then God Almighty, by his Providence, frequently interposes, that more of them shall fall in one Place than in another, to punish Mankind for their Faults, and this is a Jurisdiction, which God continually keeps over Nature, for the Government of the World ; or else Nature would be God, and not he, and Men would not have that Dependence upon him which they ought. Now the Exercise of this Jurisdiction cannot be called properly a Miracle. For a Miracle is a violent Perturbation of the Laws of Nature, a wonderful and uncommon Superseding of them, as when Fire is made not to burn, or Iron to swim in the Water ; but this providential Interposition is a gentle leading and direction of Nature, in a Course not much different from her settled Laws, is ordinary and frequent, and so not generally admired. Nature it self is all originally miraculous, and owing to a Divine Power, but by being frequently visible, is not so surprising ; and this Law of providential Interposition is as much God's Natural Law in governing the World, as the others are in preserving it. 'Tis to this Interposition of Divine Providence, that Christians in their Prayers appeal ; and this is more rational and agreeable to the Wisdom and Goodness of God, and the humble Dependence of a Creature, than any other fanciful Schemes of a Physical Predetermination, or an Atheistical Fatality.

4. Nor do we pray to God, as thinking thereby to weary him out by importunate Solicitations, or to give him a Knowledge of our Wants, &c. but we ask because he has commanded us, and upon our so doing, has told us we shall receive. And there is the same Reason, why God should require Prayer of us, as he should do any other Moral Duty ; because this makes us better Men. The frequent Returns of this Duty calls us off from the Consideration of worldly Things, and put us upon the Meditation of the Divine Nature, his Wisdom, Justice and Goodness ; to the end, that by frequently contemplating them, we may imitate those adorable Perfections. And the doing this every Day, will much more influence

a Man's Mind, than now and then a little philosophick Talk about them. This will give Men a firm Reliance upon God's Goodness, which the fluctuating Thoughts of all Sorts of Infidels, do in vain wish for; this will excite in our Souls such a new Principle of Grace, as shall enable us to conquer a corrupt Nature, and to despise the World; this will enable us to love God with the most ardent Affection, and by Degrees will fit and prepare us for another more spiritual Life.

Nor to flat-
ter him by
Thanksgiv-
ing.

5. Besides, you are guilty of another Mistake, when you think that we *Christians* put up our Thanksgivings to God, out of Opinion, that God has a fond liking to hear himself commended by us. This is a wanton Way you have got of representing Matters odiously; by which false Light you put a Fallacy upon your self, making things at first look ridiculous, and then never afterwards examining them. But what intelligent Christian, I pray, had ever this Notion of Praise; we praise God, both because he has commanded this Tribute from us, and because it is a Moral Duty, and highly reasonable so to do; and not because we think to flatter him by it. If Gratitude be a Duty to God, Praise is so; and if we are obliged to think of God's Favours, we ought to speak of them. For in such Cases Words do naturally follow our Thoughts, and when Men's Hearts are enlarged by a deep Sense of a noble Benefit, their Words will speak their inward Joy. And what Reason is there, that there should not be as great an Indication of our Gratitude towards God, as there is towards Men? Grateful Thoughts alone transitorily pass off from the Mind, but Words make them stay longer upon it, and help to fix them there. A bare Meditation on God's Benefits is oftentimes cold and flat, whilst a vocal Praise is always accompanied with Warmth and Vigour, and a noble Elevation of the Soul. When a Man thinks only of God's Goodness, his Thoughts go no farther than himself, but in Oral Thanksgivings we invite others to an equal Praise, and excite that Gratitude in other Men's Minds, which our Hearts abound with. Ah! dear Friend, never let your ill Principles lead you to

run down these Duties of *Prayer* and *Thanksgiving*, which are the only Stay of Happiness which *Mankind* has in this *World*; without these he is an elated Fool in Prosperity, and a miserable dejected Wretch in Adversity; he has no Hope of Pardon, and no Expectation of Reward: Quit not this Hold, whatever you do, and pray to God for his Grace and Favour to enlighten your Mind, even whilst you are an Unbeliever; and if to this you join your earnest Endeavours to be satisfied in your Doubts, God may give you Grace to believe and practice that Holy Religion, which you now so much despise. But have a care of totally abandoning the Worship of God, for then you can have no pretence to his Favour; and, tho' you were willing, I am afraid, you will never be able to be a Believer.

Phil. Your warm Discourse makes me a little serious, and I must needs own that I very much envy the Happiness which good Christians receive, in their Devotions and Dependence upon God; but I have long been used to a more rational and philosophick Way. However your Arguments seem to carry Weight with them, and your Advice is good; and I'll assure you I will give them both a just Consideration. But in the mean while, I will proceed to some other Duty, which Christianity enjoins; and which I have Exceptions to.

Now you Christians profess a Virtue, which you call Mortification, thereby pretending to abridge your selves of some very innocent Pleasures: But methinks this is perfect superstitious Folly. For God Almighty gave us these good Things to enjoy them, and I think we are Coxcombs if we do not. Indeed we ought not to prosecute our Satisfactions by Injustice, or to purchase our Pleasure, at the Expence of another Man's Grief; but what reason is there, why a Man should not be as happy as he can, when he does no Body any harm? I do not contend, that a Man should become a Beast for Pleasure; but, when God has provided for us like Gentlemen, why should we live like Monks?

Mortification a reasonable Duty.

Cred. You very much mistake the Christian Duty of Mortification, in thinking it to be an unreasonable Injunction. For there is nothing commanded of this Nature in the Gospel, but what is agreeable to the justest Reason: For, when we are commanded by our Saviour, in the Jewish Phrase, *to pluck out our Eye, and cut off our Hand that offends us*; that is, to tear away from our Souls the most darling Affection which may occasion us to sin; or when the Apostles tells us, 'tis our Duty to *crucify the Flesh with the Affections and Lusts*; there is nothing in these Injunctions, but what unprejudiced Reason will agree to. Every one must own, that 'tis our Duty, to arrive at as great a Pitch of Virtue as we can, or however to avoid every known Sin; now, without Mortification and Self-denial, to do this is hardly possible. Our Passions are head-strong Things, and are not to be governed, by only denying them unlawful Enjoyments; if we gratify them to the height, in all they may innocently enjoy, they will quickly crave what is noxious. A Man, that never denies himself an indifferent thing, when Temptations are strong, knows not how to deny himself a bad one. Therefore all the Parts of Mortification and Self-denial, are very reasonable and useful, to make a Habit of Virtue more easy to us, and to arrive to a more exalted Degree of it. Do you your self be Judge, if a Man shall not be more perfect in the Duty of Temperance, that is very sparing in the use of strong Drinks, than one that takes care only not to drink them quite so long, till his Reason be infatuated by them. The first keeps such a wide Distance from Intemperance, that there is no fear of falling into it, but the other walks so near the Brink of the Precipice, that a thousand Accidents may make him miscarry. Is not a Man farther removed from the Sin of Gluttony, less liable to impure Thoughts, and better qualified for serious Study, religious Exercises and Devotion, that eats always sparingly and frequently intermits his ordinary Meals, than one that eats every Day to Repletion? Is not a Man less liable to fall into unlawful Anger, that checks this Passion upon the justest Occasions,

sions, that accustoms himself to a calm and sober Way of Conversation, and has learn'd to bear the greatest Indignities with a Spirit of Meekness; than one, that suffers his Mind to be ruffled with this Passion, upon every little petty Offence? Nay, even corporal Severities, if they be not cruel or fanciful, or done with a Design of Satisfaction, or superstitiously, may have their use to wean and deter Men from Sin, and strengthen them in a Habit of Virtue.

Phil. Another Fault I find with the Christian Religion, is for forbidding Polygamy or Concubinage. For what reason is there, that this Religion should deny Mankind that Right, which they claimed in the Patriarchal Times, and under the Law? If it was unlawful or Inconvenient then, why did God allow it? Or if he saw any Inconvenience in it in latter Times, he might as well have foreseen it many Ages before. So that 'tis plain, by God's allowing it to the Patriarchs, and by the general Practice of the World, Mankind has a Right to this Privilege; and therefore 'tis an unjust Usurpation upon their Liberties, in your new Religion, to abridge them of it. Besides, Nature it self condemns this Prohibition, by making Men more prolific than Women; for a Man may have an hundred, but a Woman can seldom have above a dozen Children; a Woman is sterile before she is fifty Years old, whilst Men retain their Fecundity, oftentimes, to the Extremity of old Age. To say nothing of the Decay of the Beauty and Gracefulness of the other Sex sooner than of ours; by which Nature does, as it were, shew, that it is Time they should be laid aside, when they become unagreeable. Therefore for a Man to be clogged for his whole Life-time, to *one Woman*, upon these extraordinary Disparities, is *unreasonable*. But, if your *Christian Legislators* would suffer us to manage Matters, we would contrive a Way to make Matrimony a very pleasant thing, to increase the Breed of Mankind, and to people the World faster.

Cred. Pray, good *Philologus*, let us have no more of this *lewd Reasoning*, which is fit only for the *Rakes of the Town*,

Polygamy
not lawful
from the
Practice of
the Anci-
ents.

Town, and which I thought you had been too sober to have urged. As for your Argument for *Polygamy*, drawn from the Practice of the ancient and patriarchal Ages of the World, I think, That is no Argument for us now. If it was permitted after the *Flood*, for the speedy *Peopling the World*, then the same Reason will not hold now when 'tis better stock'd. And then *Nature* must abound most with *Females* for this very Purpose; the contrary of which we rather find now. But the case was altered in our *Saviour's Time*, *Polygamy* and *Concubinage* began to grow more out of Fashion than formerly, *in most Parts of the World, by the prevailing of the Romans, who did not use them*; and his *Religion* being to be planted chiefly within the Confines of that Empire, it was a more easy *Injunction* to ordain single Marriage, than in *Abraham's or Moses's Time*, when *Polygamy* was almost universal.

Nor from
the Practice
of the Bar-
barous.

2. Neither is it any Argument that *Polygamy* is grounded upon the Law of *Nature*, because many *barbarous Nations* do at this Day, and have in all Ages, practised it. For such Nations live in a Number of *cruel unnatural Customs*, which *Nature* could never direct them to, such as eating Man's Flesh, and even that of their own Children, publick Commixtures, Incests, and the like.

Forbid by
Christianity,
because too
Carnal.

3. Our *Saviour Christ* taught a *Religion* of the most spiritual *Nature*, that was ever known in the World, which oblig'd Men not only to avoid all gross Sins, but to curb all *unruly* and *extravagant Appetites*. And therefore it was but reasonable, that Men should not be allowed, under this pure *Institution*, in the intemperate Excesses of a *vagrant Love*, which *Polygamy* or *Concubinage* would tempt Men to. Such *Luxuries* would be inconsistent with that Purity of Mind, which the *Gospel* requires, and those fleshly Delights would be too great an Impediment, of that heavenly Mindedness, which we Christians are obliged to have.

More Com-
fort in sin-
gle Mar-
riage.

4. And though there may be something in *Polygamy* or *Concubinage*, which may gratify a sensual Man, yet they want the Satisfaction, Tenderness, and Endearments of single Marriage. *Love*, when it is so divided, is like a River

a River cut into several Channels, it loses it self when it runs into so many Streams. For there is rarely any *true conjugal Love*, and *sincere Affection* to be found among those People or Countries, where these are allowed; for there they generally matter no more the Death of one of their *Wives* or *Concubines*, than of one of their Horses. But if you will take the Opinion even of the ancient *Love-Poets*, who did not care to have their Liberty in this Matter too much abridged, they declare it for single Marriage, as to the Point of Comfort and Satisfaction, in Opposition both to *Divorce* and *Concubinage*.

H O R A C E says*:

Felices ter & amplius,
Quos irrupta tenet copula: nec malis
Divulso querimonijs
Suprema citius solvet amor die.

Thrice Happy is that Pair, and more than so
 Whom undissolved Nuptials tie;
 In Age and Peace who to the Grave do go,
 And never part before they die.

And thus P R O P E R T I U S, Lib. i Eleg. 15.

Exemplo juncta tibi sunt in amore Columbae,
Masculus, & totum Femina Conjugium.

Take for Example of your Love,
 The Mating of the Faithful Dove;
 In couples they together Coo,
 And all the Wedlock is in Two.

* Hor lib. i. Car. 13.

*Affections
of the Mar-
ried do not
naturally
wear off by
Age.*

5. Neither is it true what you say, *That Men's Affections wear off as the maturer Age of their Wives comes on*, and that they are least agreeable to them then. Indeed, there is no Account to be given for the lustful Fancies of lewd Men; but generally speaking, Men are naturally most pleased with a Parity of Age; the Soberness and Discretion, and decent Comeliness of those latter Years, in Women, are more pleasing to Men of a proportionate Age, than the finer Charms of a *blooming Beauty*. Nay, Ovid himself, who must be supposed to understand these *Matters* well enough, before he grew in Years, declares for the *seior aras*, the maturer Age of at least *Thirty-five*, *Quæ cito post septem lustra venire solet*.

And these, perhaps, your Gentlemen would begin to reckon among your *Unagreables*. But, in short, if Men lead *good and sober Lives*, and behave themselves with that Tenderness and Affection which they ought to do in a conjugal State, their *Love* would not decline with their *Years*, but they would carry on a Warmth of Affection, even to the Extremities of Old Age. But as for the Affections of lewd Men, 'tis not Youth or Beauty, or any thing else, can fix them; for we often find, that they slight and despise their virtuous and most agreeable Consorts, for the sake of filthy, and often-times unhandsome Prostitutes.

*Nor by the
speedy De-
cay of semi-
nne Beau-
ty.*

6. Neither is your Argument for *Polygamy* drawn from the speedier Decay of *feminine Beauty*, and their Sterility before that of Men, any ways concluding. For in most Marriages the Men are, or ought to be so much superior in Age to the Women, as will make up this Disproportion, so that they may grow old together by equal Degrees of Declension. That Women grow sterile sooner than Men, is no Argument that Nature design'd the Woman should be dismissed, or another Wife taken in; for this may be a Thing purely accidental in Nature, and no Design of it; but owing to the more numerous Causes of feminine than masculine Sterility. But what Reason is there that a faithful and fruitful Wife should be cast off for another, when she has already born her Husband more Children than he perhaps can well maintain and provide

provide for? And when Heaven has given her a *Manumission* from the Pains and Dangers of Child-Birth, why should she be abridged then of any Comforts of Matrimony, which the Man has enjoy'd his whole Time without Trouble?

7. But the Slavery of the *Wives*, and the constant Family-Quarrels where *Polygamy* is practiced, are unanswerable Arguments against the Use of it. There is a Sort of Equality in Marriage, and the Man is as much beholden to the Woman, as the Woman to the Man. But where *Polygamy* is practiced, the Wife has no Right at all, the whole Set of Wives being all their Husband's Slaves, and encouraged or discountenanced, bedded or turned out, according to his despotic Will and Pleasure. Which is such a perfect Enslaving one half of God's Creation, that it can never be esteemed a natural Law, or proceeding from the Establishment of a wise and just God. Or, if we look into the Quarrels and Animosities, among the Mothers and Children in the Families of *Turkey*; to observe their constant Scolding and Fighting, the rending and tearing away their Husband's Goods for their respective Children, their Jealousies, Stabbings, and Poisonings; if we have any Consideration, we must needs highly applaud the Institution of single Marriage in the Christian Religion, by which wise Injunction, Families are freed from these miserable Fewds and Distractions inseparably attending the other State.

8. But Lastly, 'Tis to me a Demonstration, that *Polygamy* has no ground in Nature, and that it does not at all contribute to the Peopling the World; but that it rather hinders it. If Nature designed *Polygamy*, she would have made three or four Women for one Man; but Experience shews, that more Males are born than Females. In all Accounts of the Births of Children, there is one in twenty born more of Boys than Girls; which seems to be a prudent Design of Nature for a Supply, for the Consumption of Men in the Wars, and other difficult Labours, which they are expos'd to. Therefore the Number of *marriageable Men and Women* are equal; so that if

Objection against Polygamy from the slavery of such Wives.

From the Equality of Males and Females.

if one *Man* was allow'd to have four *Wives*, there must three other Men go without any Wife at all; which would be very great Injustice to be forced to. Neither would this contribute to the Peopling of the World; for if all the Men and Women in the World were joined in single *Marriage*, they would have more Children, than if they were so sorted, that sometimes one *Man* should have half a dozen *Wives*, and a great many none at all. For it is not to be doubted, but that six *Men* and six *Women*, shall, generally speaking, have more Children, than one *Man* and six *Women*. Therefore, I say, that seeing there are but an equal Number of *Men* and *Women* in the World, *Polygamy* has no Ground in Nature; nor would the World be better peopled, if it were allow'd. And the same Reason holds against Plurality of Husbands, or Community of Wives, or any other Way of Concubinage or Matrimony, besides single Marriage, which 'tis plain Nature directs to solely, by the producing an Equality of *Males* with *Females*.

Phil. The next *Doctrine of Christianity* I except against, is, its *not allowing Divorce*, upon Disparity of Temper, and Intolerableness of Conversation. There are some Wives of that hellish Disposition, that a Man had better be coupled for Life with a *Succubus*, or She-devil; their intolerable Peevishness, clamorous and spightful Behaviour, make a Man's Life a Sort of Damnation, and occasions several to venture it in another World, to get rid of it here. But what reason is there, that a Man should be forced his whole Life-time, to abide this Misfortune, without Redress? Here was an Error committed in the very fundamental Contract of Matrimony, and therefore ought in all Equity, to be redrest. A Man thought of marrying a sweet-disposition'd peaceable Wife, and not such an infernal Shrew; he reckon'd in his Bargain, to have a *meet Help*, as you call it, and not a Plague, for Life. But if Adultery be a sufficient Reason for Divorce, why not Intolerableness of Conversation? For I had a thousand times rather be married to a good-natur'd Whore, than such an eternal Scold.

Cred. Pray, Sir, let us have no more of this Declaration. For if you seriously consider the Case, you must needs allow of our Saviour's Determination, that Divorce is not to be allowed upon Unagreeableness of Temper. As you have stated the Case, you lay all the Blame on the Woman's Side; but, upon View, there might be as many Women likewise found, who would be as glad of a Divorce, upon Account of intolerable Husbands. And I believe most of your Friends, who complain so much of this Restraint, by their Lewdness and Ill-treatment of their Wives, have brought them to that discontented Humour. 'Tis true, there is frequently a very uncomfortable Living together of some, in a *married State*, either through the Fault of Husband or Wife, or both; but why can't these Faults be altered, without disannulling the *Marriage*? If a Man, or a Woman, be of an angry, fretful, or positive Temper, they must subdue their Nature, and rectify these ill Habits, and bare with one another's Failures, and then they may live as comfortably together, as other People: But as long as they give the Reins to these exorbitant Passions, they may *divorce* and *marry*, and *divorce* again, till *Doomsday*, and live never the more happy for it. But granting, that there are some *married* together, of such a Disparity of Temper, that they can never live happy; it is better they should suffer a little, than the World should be put in Distraction by a Licence of Divorce, upon Pretence of this. The best Laws, that are in the World, happen accidentally, sometimes, to lie hard upon some, and yet so universal is their Benefit, that no reasonable Man would desire the repeal of them, because some few Men may chance to suffer by them. Would you be content, that the Nation should suffer all the Miseries which arbitrary Divorces would bring, only to have some of your Friends rid of cross Wives? How many wicked Pretences would there be to cast off honest and virtuous Wives, when the vicious Husbands had seen some Body else they liked better? Divorces, upon some special Reasons, were allow'd to the *Jews*; but

Unreasonableness of
Arbitrary
Divorces.

but then, as appears by their *Rabbies*, they were incouraged by this, to take any Occasion to do it. Maimonides allows it a just Cause for Divorce, *That the Wife is not Well-bred*, others, *that she does not salt, or dress her Husband's Meat well*, and R. Akiba says the Cause is just, *If he can Marry a Woman handsomer than his Wife, because it is said, if she does not find Favour in his Eyes.* And if Divorces should once come to be tolerated; such sort of Casuists as these, would be mightily in Request. But put the Case home to your self: If you had a civil virtuous Daughter, *Married to a lewd Gentleman*, would you be willing, that, when he had given her all the Provocations imaginable to provoke her Passion, by an alienating of his Affection; and by a Conversation with lewd Women, I say, would you be willing after all this, that he should have the Power of branding her with the Name of an untameable Shrew and turning her Home again. If this was tolerated, it would bring an unknown Train of Wickedness into the World, in an Age which is but too wicked already. Husbands would throw off their Wives for their Waiting-Women; Wives would often leave their anti-enter Husbands for young spruce Gallants; the Children of the divorced Wife would often be turned out, with their Mother, or Disinherited of their lawful Inheritance, to gratify the new Spouse; Law-Suits would continually arise among the different Children, for their Share of the Patrimony, or when they were Young, would be cruelly abused by the latter Wife, or by their Father, who would be influenced by her; and the best Families, in little time, would be reduced to Beggary, by Contentions, or a multitude of Children. Now these are such miserable Inconveniences, that a little uncomfortable Living with a foward Wife, is much rather to be chosen, than to be forced to undergo them. Therefore you Unbelievers have no Reason to find Fault with this injunction, or Determination of our Blessed Saviour in this Case; but have rather great Reason to admire his Wisdom, in forbidding a Custom, which tends so much to the Bane of the Common-wealth, and of all humane Society.

Phil. Ano-

Phil. Another Objection, which I have against the doctrinal Part of Christianity, is, because it teaches Meekness and Humility; which in my Mind, are Qualifications for a Sheep, and not for a *Man*. These are * Dependencies of *Mind*, for a *Man's* not being so considerable as he ought to be; but then he ought to arrive to that Pitch, and not to be creeping in a lower Class of Virtue, when he ought to have advanced himself to an higher. And therefore I like *Machiavel's* Notion very well, who says the *Christian Religion* is not a proper Religion for a brave Prince, for if it have any Influence upon him, it will infect his Soul with such a poor Puffianity, as will render him unfit for any great or glorious Actions. These are Virtues unheard of by the *Greeks* and *Romans*, who studied these Matters the best, for their Philosophers read noble Lectures upon Magnanimity, and a Generousness of Soul but never thought of two such narrow-spirited Habits, as *Meekness* and *Humility*.

Cred. I very much wonder, you should go about to undervalue and expose that modest and humble Temper of *Mind*, which our Religion recommends, under the Names of *Meekness* and *Humility*; I should think you should rather look upon it, as the great Glory of our Saviour's Institution, to recommend a Virtue, which is so useful to Society, and which yet the most learned Sages of the World have passed over unregarded, in their Ethicks. The *Heathen Philosophers* make a mighty Stir, with their *Magnanimity*, or *Bravery of Soul*, and yet all this, at the bottom, is nothing but unregenerate Pride. A *Man* perhaps had enjoy'd the Honour of a considerable Victory, was born in the famous City of *Athens*, had studied some Years in the *Porch* or *Academy*, had gotten some Fallacies together, to prove that Nothing could be made out of Nothing, that there could be no *Motion*, that a *wise Man* was happy in Pain, or that Virtue was an Animal, &c. and the *vain Man* was so elated with one or two of these Trifles, that he despise

*Humility
and Meek-
ness moral
Virtues.*

* Spinoz. Op. Postuma. p. 205.

A CONFERENCE

fed all the World besides, as barbarous Fools, and an unthinking *Mob*. Others laid down for themselves some Principles of Honour which were in Repute with the common People, and they chose closely to follow these, because they found they should be applauded for it, and mightily admired. Now this Sort of Pride they gave a good Name to, and stiled *Magnanimity*, or *Greatness of Soul*, and made this pass too for another venerable Quality amongst the People, who were so well managed as to admire the Philosophers the more for their despising them. But I wonder you should so abandon your Reason, as to find Fault with our *Christian Humility*, and extol this *philosophick Pride* for a famous Virtue. Do you your self be Judge; which is the most commendable Quality, for a *Man* humbly to acknowledge his own Imperfections and Failures, and to own how far he falls short of the *Measures* of the exactest Virtue, or arrogantly to pretend that he is arrived to a Pitch of Virtue, by which he is equal to the *God's*? Is it not more modest and reasonable, to attribute the Success of our best *Actions to the Grace of God*; than to ascribe it to, I know not what infallible Rules of Virtue, and to pretend we are a *Sort of Gods to our selves*? What *Reason* was there, that *those old Sages* should be *so elated* upon their natural Stock of Parts, upon the Advantage of their *Education*, and their *philosophick Studies*? Is not a *Christian* much the better *Man*, who tho' he stands possessed of these *Qualifications*, does reflect no Glory upon himself for them, but humbly considers, that these are all the Gift of a *gracious God*, to whom all the Praise of them belongs? There is no way to excuse the *Philosophers* for their *arrogant Contempt* of the *common People*, because they wanted the Education they enjoy'd; and for their refusing them the Knowledge of those virtuous Rules, they kept under Lock and Key among themselves. How much more is the *Christian Religion* to be admired that teaches an *Humility*, to be kind and obliging to all, and to look upon the whole *Race of Mankind*, as our *Fellow-Creatures* and *Brethren*; to despise no one's

Imperfections, when we consider *our own*; to undervalue *none* for their Wants and Failures, but rather to pity them, and when 'tis in our *Power* to relieve them; to think *no Body* fit to be despised, that *God* has given an *immortal Soul* to, and that we can never be *too great to do good to our Fellow-Creatures*, who have received all that we have from an *infinite God*. But if our *Religion* instead of *Humility* taught, your *Heathen Magnanimity*, what a conceited *World* should we in a little while see? Tho' *Men* are daily taught to have as humble and mean Thoughts as they can of themselves; yet notwithstanding this, many will be meddling with Matters out of their Sphere, and neglect their *Profession* to be menders of *Church* and *State*; but if all *Men* should once get in their Heads *your Notion of philosophick Bravery or Magnanimity*, we should have all mean People despise their Callings, and leave the Fields, and their Shops, to turn *Philosophers, Statesmen, and Politicians*.

But is it a Fault to be humble, because *Humility* is a *Spinosa's Sorrow* for not having that just *Perfection* a *Man* should have? If it be a Virtue to desire to be as good as one car, it is some Degree of Virtue to be sorry one is no better. But your *Philosopher Spinosa* mistakes the Matter, when he makes *Humility* a *Sorrow of Mind*, for want of that *virtuous Perfection* we would have: This is properly that *Passion of the Mind*, we generally call *Æmulation*. But *Humility* is quite another Thing, it is a *fix'd Temper of Mind*, whereby, after a serious Consideration of human Imperfection, and the *Divine Bounty*, we attribute no Glory to our selves for any thing valuable we possess, nor undervalue others for want of them. And if by *God's Grace*, the whole *World* was brought to this *Christian Temper*, we should find that *Mankind* would be more peaceable and good, more kind and charitable, than when they are led by their *own Passions*, nay, than if they were all instructed, by the swaggering Principle of *your Philosophick Magnanimity*.

Nor is there any Weight in your *Machiavelian Reason*; that a good *Christian* can't be a brave Prince. It ^{And Machiavel's} is

is a *horrible Reflexion* upon the *Royal Dignity*, to think that it cannot be discharged, by an *honest Man*. For *Christianity* really forbids nothing, but what is wicked. Indeed, if Cruelty and Oppression, Fraud and Perfidiousness, Plundering and Ravaging the *Countries of harmless Neighbours*, and an insatiable Desire of *Conquest*, at the Expence of the *Blood of ones dearest Friends*, do qualify a *Man* to be a great Prince; then, I confess, the true *Christian Religion* will never assist any one with these Methods: But if it be any Ingredient of the Character of a brave Prince, to cherish and defend his own Subjects, and to do no Injustice to his Neighbours; to keep his Word inviolable, and his Oaths sacred; to encourage Virtue and Goodness, and to despise Falsehood and Treachery; then our *Holy Religion*, if sincerely practiced, will make the noblest Prince; and may *God Almighty*, of his Mercy, grant that all, whose Lot it is to sit upon our *English Throne*, may be the *most Christian Kings*, in this Sense. As for the *good Government of a Nation in time of Peace*, I think there is no Doubt to be made, but that a *wise Prince* of a *good Conscience*, is the best qualified; and, if he has equal Courage, he is the same in time of War; for Instances have not been wanting in History of Princes, such as *Constantine*, and *Charles the Great*, who were *religious Christians*, and *brave Warriors*.

Phil. Next I have to object against the *Doctrine of Christianity*, for its commanding Men to forgive Injuries, after such a simple Rate, as would expose Men, if they practis'd it, to all the Calumny in the World. * Who can ever be brought to think, that a *Man*, having received a Blow on one Cheek, should be obliged to offer the other? This would be to invite one Injury upon the back of another, and to make innocent Men suffer, only to make ill-natur'd People sport. But to be obliged to love our Enemies, is a thing naturally impossible to do; for God has naturally implanted in

* Uriel Acosta Exemplar. Hum. Vitæ. ed. per Limb. p. 352.

Men Passions of Anger and Revenge, which are excited in them upon Injuries received; and therefore it is impossible to love them, that Nature inclines and disposes us to hate.

Cred. You now find Fault with the most glorious *Morality*, which ever was preached in the World, and which is laid out by the *Wisdom of God*, for the greatest Peace and Quiet of Mankind, and is agreeable to the exactest Rules of unprejudiced Reason. As for the Instance of *our Saviour*, in the left and right Cheek; that is only a proverbial Saying, which he uses, as an Illustration of what he Preached. He was endeavouring to amend, in the *Jews*, that *vindictive Humour*, which was so common among them, and which the old Law did, in some Measure connive at, by allowing them the Law of Retaliation, *An Eye for an Eye, and a Tooth for a Tooth*; but *our Saviour* is for prohibiting all Sort of Revenge, tho' never so specious and legal; and therefore tells them, that they should be so far from demanding an Eye for an Eye, or a Blow for a Blow, that they should rather turn the right Cheek to him that smote the left. That is, you *Christians* ought to take no manner of Revenge, and tho' your suffering patiently, one Affront may produce another, yet choose rather to suffer that too, than to retain Malice or Revenge in your Minds.

Neither is it at all unreasonable to bear and forgive Injuries, but is really agreeable to the highest Wisdom, and Discretion. What can be more reasonable, than for one Man patiently to bear an Offence from another, who is conscious to himself of having so often provoked a merciful God, who continues still to bear with him? What more reasonable to suffer these from other Men, when we our selves cannot live, without giving Offences to them? It is highly reasonable to bear with Injuries, and readily to forgive them, if it were only to be rid of those *t tormenting Passions*, which accompany a State of Enmity; and to be freed from the Study of Malice and Revenge, which do so gnaw Men's Souls,

Turning
the Cheek
Metapho-
rical.

and prey upon their Vitals. If a Man wisely consults his own Interest, he will never provoke others to continue his Enemie still, by returning an Injury; but will rather, by doing good to them, regain their Friendship, which will be much more advantageous, and much more grateful, to a wise Man, than to have them continue in their Enmity.

And lastly, Is it not a greater Sign of Wisdom for a Man to slight Affronts so often, that Men shall be a weary of giving them, when they find he takes so little Notice of them; than by a *passionate Cognizance*, or *Retaliation*, to provoke Men to give them more, for the Satisfaction of seeing him so much disturbed at them?

Not impossible. But why is it impossible to love our Enemies? Altho' in a corrupt Nature we find some Tendency towards revenging an Injury; yet is in the *Power of Grace* and *Religion*, to correct these outragious Desires. If it be reasonable to forgive Injuries, and bear Affronts, it is as reasonable to love our Enemies, for the same Arguments; and, if it be reasonable to love our Enemies, then our *revealed Religion* which teaches this, is better than the *natural one*, which directs to hate our Enemies, upon Account of several Tendencies of Nature towards it. But it is the Saying only of unregenerate Men, that it is impossible to love our Enemies and true *Christians* experience the contrary. It is indeed impossible, as well as unreasonable, to love an Enemy, as well as a dear Friend; but Men may very possibly, and do very ordinarily love their Enemies, so as to wish them no harm, to bear them no Ill-will, and to do them any Kindness which lies in their Power, as readily as if they never had been offended by them. And perhaps naturally 'tis is impossible to do this, because there is not Force enough in pure Nature, or Reason, to overcome this natural *Propension to Revenge*. But when a Man's *honest Resolutions* are strengthened by the *Grace of God*, and when *God's Promises* on one hand, and his *Threatnings* on the other, inforce this *Duty*, when a Man considers, that without *loving Enemies*, he can have no Hopes to avoid Hell, or obtain He-

ven,

ven, he may then, without the greatest Difficulty, subdue this natural *Propension to Revenge*, which our *Saviour* has commanded us to do. As for this * Man, from whom you *borrow* this Argument of the *Impossibility of loving Enemies*, he was a sowre peevish *Atheist*, who had embraced and renounced the *Jewish Religion* two or three times over, and lived for a great while miserably under a *Jewish Excommunication at Amsterdam*, and when he was received again, was most horribly beaten in the *Jewish Synagogue*; now this sad unregenerate Wretch having no *Hopes of Immortality*, could not subdue his Nature so as to *forgive his Enemies*, but was resolved to Murder his Nephew, who was the *Informer*, of his *atheistical Principles*, and his *Contempt of the Mosaical Law*, to the *Synagogue*, and therefore in this *Treatise*, which he calls *Exemplar Humanæ Vitæ*, he denies the Possibility of it. He had this *murderous Design*, I say, in his Head, when he wrote this little Tract; for he shot off a Gun at his Nephew out of a Window, as he passed by, but missing him, and fearing Detection, soon afterwards shot himself, leaving behind him this *Treatise*, called, *Exemplar Humanæ Vitæ*, which came first into *Episcopius's*, and afterwards into Monsieur *Limborch's* Hands, who first publish'd it with an Answer to it.

Phil. But why does the *Christian Religion* forbid Law Suits? why do the *Professors* of it so little Practice its *Commands*? And what Reason is there, that if a *Man sue another at Law, and take away his Coat, he should let him take his Cloak also?* Certainly there is no Reason why I should sacrifice the Welfare of my self and Family to the Injustice of every impudent Oppressor. If he will do unrighteous Things, he must take what follows; and as long as the Law will guard us from such Oppression, a Man is a Fool that will lie under it.

Cred. You mistake the *Nature of our Saviour's Precept*, if you think that it *destroys all Courts of Judicature*; ^{Christ did} *not absolutely for-* for our *Saviour* quietly lived under the *Jewish Judicial* ^{lately for-} *Law* ^{bid Law} *Suits.*

* Acosta.

Law, and declares *He came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfil*; whatever was grounded upon natural and moral Rules of Justice and Charity, he retain'd in his New Institution, or improved it; and abolished nothing but what was ceremonial or typical, or indulged to the carnal Affections of the Jews. And St. Paul declares, *That the secular Powers are ordained of God, that the Magistrate is the Minister of God, that he beareth not the Sword in vain:* And he does not find Fault that the Christians do at all go to Law, but that they went to Law in the *Heathen Courts*, 1 Cor. vi. 1. *Dare any of you, having a Matter against another, go to Law before the unjust, and not before the Saints? Do you not know that the Saints shall judge the World? And if the World shall be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest Matters?* Therefore, these Words of our Saviour's must be taken, as spoken in a proverbial Way; that we ought not to be forward to go to Law with our Neighbours, upon every little petty Offence, but rather to bear a considerable Detriment, as the loss of a Cloak, than to engage our selves in those Contests, in which it is very difficult to demean our selves, without breach of Christian Charity. But when the loss is very grievous or considerable, and affects the Welfare of our Families, our Saviour does not at all forbid us to right our selves by the ordinary Course of legal Justice; there being no Reason, that we and our Children should suffer, perhaps, the greatest Extremities, rather than that a griping Oppressor should be a little troubled.

Phil. There is another Christian Virtue, much talked of, which you call *Repentance*; but this is so far from a Virtue, that it is a poor wretched *Passion*, a sad *Grief* and *Despondency of Mind*, which a wise Man, who is governed by Reason, cannot fall under. * He that repents of an Action is doubly miserable, he first suffers himself to be overcome by an evil *Desire*, and then again by a dejected *Sorrow*. And truly nothing exposed Christianity more to the *Heathen World* than this *Doctrine of Repen-*

* Spinos. Op. post. p. 206.

tance, which occasions *Celsus* to say: *To the Heathen Sacrifices, the Crier calls to come, whosoever is pure and wise, and free from Evil: But whom do the Christians call? Whosoever is a Sinner, whosoever is Silly, whosoever is a Child, him the Kingdom of Heaven shall receive.* You call yourselves Sinners, under which Name are understood all sorts of unjust Persons, Thieves, Poisoners, the Sacrilegious, House-breakers, and Robbers of Tombs. Now if one was to raise a company of Thieves, one could not be better fitted, than with such People as these. And is it not odd, to have a Religion made up of such sort of Men, that were wicked at first, and are always sinning, and repenting afterwards, or as a *Quaker* has expressed it, from Sixteen to Sixty, are, saying, *We have erred and strayed like lost Sheep, and go no farther.* Men should take care to establish in themselves a settled Habit of Virtue, and not chequer out their Lives, as most of you Christians do, with half Saint, and half Sinner; if they find, upon just Reasoning, that they go on in a *wrong Course of Life*, they ought, like wise Men, without any more to do, to turn into the *Right*; but I cannot imagine what Use there is of a whining Repentance, or maudlin Devotion.

Cred. We can easily grant *Spinoza*, without the Pains of his *Propositions* and *Corollaries*, that the bare Sorrow of Repentance is a Passion, and not a Virtue; but Repentance considered in its full Extent, as it takes in all the Acts, which are requisite to this Grace, is a *Divine Grace*, or *Christian Virtue*. If it be vicious to be willing to continue bad, then it is some Degree of Virtue to be willing to be good. If it be a Sin to be glad of doing Ill, it is Virtuous to be sorry for having done it. If it be wicked, carelessly to continue out of *God's Favour*, it is good, earnestly to endeavour to be reconciled to him; and if it be bad to continue in our Sins, 'tis better to forsake them. Therefore, *Repentance*, by which we do all this, is truly and properly a Virtue. But Repentance is not, as your *Author* would make the *World* believe, a *bare Sorrow* for Sin, but a stedfast *Resolution* of Amendment first, and afterwards an *actual Conversion*. The whole Perform-

Repentance
not only
Sorrow.

Performance of which is the true Gospel Repentance, which, next to an uninterrupted Obedience, is most virtuous and dear in God's Sight.

*Repentance
not so trou-
blesome as
sin.*

Neither is there so much Miserableness in Repentance, as you imagine. Indeed, if a Man never sinned, he would be happier than the easiest Penitent; but the greatest Sinner, that has made his Peace with God, is infinitely more at Ease, than the most thoughtless Unregenerate. 'Tis true, there is some Trouble in Repentance, in conquering so many evil Desires, and leaving off so many Ill-habits; but it is not comparable to those *Dreads* and *Horrors*, which are continually in Solitude, assaulting the Mind of the most regardless Sinners, and give me leave to say of the *Atheistical Doubter* too. But when a Man by sincere Repentance has made his Peace with **God**, and is received into his *Favour*, he then receives the greatest Comfort that ever he felt, or can feel here; so that Men, who have experienced it, have compared it to their Enjoyment of Ease, after a racking Fit of *Gout* or *Stone*.

Nor is it any Disgrace to the Christian Religion, that its Members sometimes have lived *lewd* and *flagitious Lives*, before their *Conversion* to Christianity, or before they were sincere Practicers of its *Doctrines*; but it is rather the greatest *Glory* and *Honour* of our Religion, that the *Doctrines* it teaches are of so great Efficacy, and the Assurances of **God's** Holy Spirit, which it lays claim to, are so prevalent, that they can *over-power* the *Stubbornness* of a *pervese Will*, and the most *inveterate Habits*, and can make those Men eminent Examples of Virtue, who have so long been beaten to *Vice*.

*Daily Re-
pentance
reasonable.*

And 'tis with as little *Reason* that you *endeavour* to expose that *daily Repentance*, which Christians in their Prayers do exercise. For whatever some Men, who pretend to sinless Perfection, may say to the contrary; all sober Christians must own, that, as long as they carry *Flesh* and *Blood* about them, they will be *subject* to a great many Imperfections and Failures, which **God's** Word, and their own Reason tells them *they ought to have avoided*. Now 'tis

'tis the Duty of our daily Prayers, to beg *Pardon* of *God* for these Failures. I do not say, that *good* Christians do every Day commit *gross* and *known* *Sins*, and as often repent of them, and fall into them again; for a Man is not become a *good* Christian, that has not fully conquered all Habits of Sin, and does not carefully avoid every enormous Act of Vice. But alas! There is no *good* Christian but must allow, that he oftentimes, through Ignorance or Inadvertency, either does, or omits, that which his Conscience afterwards checks him for, and which he would not have done upon second Thoughts; there are so many Circumstances, which may occasion Illness in a moral Action, which the wisest Man cannot always sufficiently consider; there are so many cross Accidents befall us in the World, that we are oftentimes, before we are aware, betray'd into some unjustifiable Fits of Discontent and Peevishness, or causeless Anger; our constant Application to worldly Busines, gives our Minds such a Tincture of carnal Things, that sometimes we may chance to omit, or make some indecent Excursions of Thought in our Devotion. Now these are really Faults, and which our Reason and Conscience cannot justify, and, therefore, it is but *reasonable*, that, as often as we find our selves to have fallen into them, we should make our Peace with *God* for these Deficiencies, and beg his Grace for a greater Vigilance for the future. And truly, if there were any State of absolute moral Perfection in this World, this were much a *better* way to obtain it, than by an *arrogant Pretence to Perfection*, in the midst of so many Failures unrepented of.

And I must further take the *Boldness* to tell you, That the *Sorrow* in the Duty of Repentance, which Christianity supposes, is a very *rational Thing*. Indeed I must needs own, that the *turning into a good Course of Life*, after a vicious one, is the thing principally design'd by God, by enjoining the Duty of Repentance; but yet such is the Nature of Man, that *Repentance can hardly possibly be sincere, without this previous Sorrow.*

Sorrow. For Man is a Creature of *Flesh and Blood*, and made up of *Passions*, and what does not make some considerable Impress upon his Affections, makes little or none upon his Mind. If a Man be fully satisfied in his *Reason*, that he has carried himself undutifully towards *God Almighty*; that he has offended a good and *gracious Benefactor*, by the most *unworthy Provocations*; that he has been guilty of the most stupid Folly, by neglecting his *chiefest Good*, and spending his Time in *foolish insignificant Vanities*; that he has contracted to himself the *Infection* of an *enormous Guilt*, and run himself into great Hazard of everlasting Punishment: When a Man gives himself up to the *serious Consideration* of all this, he cannot *but be* heartily sorry for bringing himself into these unhappy Circumstances, and the more deeply his Mind reflects upon it, the greater will his Grief be; and Men, whose Affections are tender in other Cases, if they are not so in *Repentance*, do not seriously enough consider their *Condition*, and are not so *sincere* in this Duty, as they ought to be. The hardest *Constitution of Soul* will, in some Measure, be affected with this; nor is it requisite that Men, whose Affections are not the *tenderest*, should be obliged to all those Sighs and Tears, which the more affectionate Souls abound with.

Phil. My next *Exception* is against a Doctrine you Christians espouse, which is, that Mens Actions are influenced by the *Grace*, as you call it, *of God*. For my part, I think this looks like *enthusiastical Cant*; for we find within us a Power to do *Good*, or *Evil*, as we please; but such a sort of supernatural Influence, as you contend for, would make Men perfect *Machines*. If it be Mens Duty to do good, it is in their Power to do it; and therefore it would argue great Injustice and Tyranny in *God Almighty*, to punish Men for not doing that, which he himself only can do in them. Besides, methinks this is a lazy irreligious Sort of Doctrine, which destroys *human Endeavours*, and *good Tendencies*, and puts all into the Power of an irresistible Grace, which holds Men in Fancy they shall be saved, though they live never so wickedly.

wickedly. Good honest Pagan Morality is much to be preferr'd to such Sort of Grace. For what are Men the better for sitting with their Hands in their Pockets, and talking of Jesus Christ? For if the Doctrine of Jesus Christ be good for any thing, it is *good* to be practiced; but no rational Man can believe, that Jesus Christ should give Men Laws to observe, and that he should only observe them, for them himself.

Cred. It is no Objection against the Reality of *divine Grace*, that some enthusiastical, or ill-designing Men, have made great Mistakes about it, or made false Pretences to it. There is hardly any thing in the World so plain, but some Men have misconstrued; or any thing so good, but others have perverted. It is not my Business to defend those extravagant Notions some Men have had concerning irresistible Grace; but yet, I say, we have all the Reason in the World to believe, that there is a Portion of God's Holy Spirit, continually ready to assist Christian Men in their good Designs, and which does co-operate with their Endeavours. That this is a *Doctrine* of our *holy Religion* is plain, not only from the *Promise* of our *Saviour* in sending the Holy Ghost, but from the Effects of Divine Grace, frequently mentioned by the Apostles. *By Grace ye are saved by Faith, and not by Works, least any should Glory*, Eph. ii. 8, 11. *Being confident of this very thing, that he which has begun a good Work in you, will perform it untill the Day of Jesus Christ*, Phil. i. 6. *I can do all Things through Christ which strengthens me*, Phil. iv. 13. *The God of Peace, &c. make you perfect in every good Work to do his Will, working in you that which is pleasing in his Sight*. 'Tis plain then, that this is the *Doctrine* of our *Religion*, and 'tis as reasonable it should be so. For when we live in a *World of Sense*, where our *Affections* are all biassed to carnal Objects, when we have strong Passions towards Pleasure, and but weak Inclinations to Good, unless God Almighty did vouchsafe us considerable Measures of his Grace, we should be able to do nothing as we ought to do. So wonderful is the *Corruption of human Nature*, and it has

*Doctrine of
Grace vin-
dicated.*

such

such a Propensity to do Evil, that I believe the worst Men do enjoy a Share of God's restraining Grace, which does not let them be so very wicked, as otherwise they would be. But in good and regenerate Men, the Point is out of all doubt: Let a *good Man*, who has formerly lived an *ungodly Life*, remember how irksome and impossible (almost) it *look'd* to him then, to resist a *Temptation*, which now he can do with Facility and Pleasure. This is not to be attributed only to an *habitual Custom* of *Goodness*; for oftentimes sincere Penitents experience it in themselves, of a sudden, upon their first turning to *God*; they feel a *total Renovation* of their *Minds*, and such a new Principle within them, as gives them a perfect *Abhorrence of all Evil*, and a *Disgust of their formerly most beloved Pleasures*. Nor can you account for this by *Fear* or *Fancy*, for how should these silly Passions *be able* to make such noble Conquests over Men's Natures? The best and wisest Christians know and experience this to be true and it rather shews a Degree of Spleen or Humour, to deny so manifest a Truth, which good Men are as sure of, as that they see or walk.

But you do not fairly conclude, that it argues any Injustice in *God* to punish Men for their Sins, though *God* does not afford them his Grace. For all Men may have as great a Share of God's Grace, as is necessary to their Salvation, if they sincerely ask it by Prayer; but there is no Reason why *God* should be obliged to force the Influence of his *Holy Spirit* upon them, whether they will or no. Nay, such is the *Goodness of God*, that he puts *good Thoughts* very often into the Minds of wicked Men, in *order to reclaim them*, tho' they as often *ungraciously* slight and despise them. If they would take care to *encourage* and *cherish* those *good Motions*, *God* would go further with them, and give them Grace sufficient to conquer their evil Habits; but when they refuse *God's gracious Offers* at first, and shew no manner of Willingness to amend their Lives, but *industriously* stifle every *good Thought* which is suggested to them; it is *unreasonable* to think, that *God* ought to force their Wills to *Re-pentance*,

pentance, and to deal with them, as if they were mere *Machines*.

Phil. But methinks, *Credentius*, the *Notion* which the *Generality* of you *Christians* have of the *Sacraments*, is very odd, *viz.* *That they confer Grace*, as your *Divines* speak. Now, tho' we grant that *Grace* is given by the *Holy Ghost*, yet it is not to be imagined that it should come by *eating Bread*, or by *being dipt in Water*. This, the *Socinians* are Men of *too good Reason* to be *un sensible* of. And one of them argues thus: * *The Word and Sacraments are a sort of Means that act not by any natural Tendency of their own, nor by any Harmony, Suitableness, or Agreeableness to our Powers, Faculties, or Natures, but by a Theurgical, Telestick, and Mystical Operation; which is to say, they work upon our Minds, as Spells, Charms, and Incantations.* Let a *Man in Black* *sprinkle* you with some of the *Churches Water*, or give you a *Bit of Bread*, or a *Sup of Wine*, over which he has pronounced the *wonder-working Words* prescribed in *Mother-Churches Ritual*, though by *Nature* you are as bad as the *Devil*, you shall be qualified for *Heaven*. And this no less certainly, than by *tying the Norman Knot*, you may gain the *Love of the Person* you desire; or by other *Devices*, recorded in the learned *Books of Magick*, you may cause *Hatred*, *raise Winds*, and do a thousand other *Feats*. Therefore, when St. Austin defined a *Sacrament* to be the *outward visible Sign of an inward spiritual Grace*; the *good Father* should have considered, that this is the *Definition of a Charm, and not of a Gospel-Sacrament*.

Cred. I am heartily sorry that any who pretend *Respect* to our blessed *Lord*, as the *Unitarians* do, should endeavour to expose any Part of his *Holy Institution*, which can do no Service to any but the *Infidels*; for no Body that believes the *Orthodox Doctrines*, will ever be brought over to the *Unitarian Principles* by such shocking *Raillery*; which makes all *good Men* but hate and abhor their *Principles* the more. But let us look a little into this *Jest* of a Comparison, between *Sacraments and Charms*.

* *Trinit. Scheme of Religion*, p. 24.

Sacrament
rightly desi-
ned to be an
outward
and visible
Sign, &c.

You find Fault that a *Sacrament* is defined to be an *outward* and *visible* Sign of an *inward* and *spiritual* Grace. But, I pray, for what Reason? These Things in our Religion, which we call *Sacraments*, are holy Rites instituted by our Lord *Jesus Christ*, the Founder of our Religion. They were called by the *Latin Church Sacra-
menta*, from the *Roman Sacramentum*, the Soldier's Oath or Engagement to his General. Now, because in these two Rites, *viz.* *Baptism* and the *Lord's-Supper*, there was a mutual *Engagement*, or *Covenant*, between Christ and his faithful People; therefore the Ancients thought it *not improper* to call these *Sacraments*, or *Engagements*. The *Sacrament of Baptism* was a *Covenant*, by which we first enter into the Service of Christ, and agree with him to *obey his Commands*, upon condition we may be Partakers of the Rewards his *Religion* promises; and in the *Sacra-
ment of the Lord's-Supper*, we not only commemorate his Benefits, but receive fresh Assurances of his Promises, and new Assurances of his Grace to perform the *Condi-
tions* required for them. Now this being the Nature of these *two Performances*, where is the *Impropriety* of establishing a *visible Sign*? Is not there something like this in all Sorts of *Covenants*? When the *Romans* made an Agreement with their Enemies, the *Fecialis* made use of such an outward Sign, and throw'd a Stone violently out of his Hands, wishing, *If he acted treacherously, that the Gods would deal with him as with that Stone.* So Gen. xv. 10. Abraham makes a *Covenant with God*, by dividing the *Body of an Heifer, a She-goat, and Ram, into two Parts*. And to this Day, we still find the like Ceremonies used in private Contracts; as in the Selling of Estates, the Delivery of Writings; in Matrimony, the Delivery of a Ring, or the Joining of Hands. Now what Reason is there, why our Saviour might not ordain these *outward* *visible Signs*, in these two federal Ordinances, as well as any civil State does the like? These outward visible Signs usually carry such a decent Solemnity with them, as very much engages Men's *Attention* and *Respect*, and helps to make a greater *Impression upon their Memory*, than when there

there is only a bare verbal Agreement in a Covenant. Besides, these outward visible Signs are absolutely necessary in divine Covenants, or in Stipulations between God and Men; for unless God did ordinarily and immediately converse with Men himself, there must be such an outward and visible Sign to represent the Stipulation of God on his Part. From all which, I conclude, that you have no Reason to find Fault with the outward visible Signs in the Sacraments, but rather to admire the Fitness and Excellency of their Institution.

Nor is the *Institution* in these Covenants of outward ^{Difference} Signs more reasonable than your *Comparison* of them, with Spells and Charms, is void of *Reason*. For Spells or Charms are *Diabolical*, or at least *superstitious Practices*; but neither of these can be charged upon the two Sacraments instituted by our *blessed Lord*. He had a Power from Heaven to found the Christian Religion, and had *Authority* from thence to *ordain* what *Methods* were fitting for the *Propagating* or *Practicing* it. Now when the *Sacraments* are founded on such *divine Authority*, it is not very decent or civil, to compare this pious *Covenant* with God, with the *Contract* of Witches, or other deluded People, with the Devil. Or if it becomes an Infidel to do so, the *Socinian* did a little forget himself, to talk after this Rate, *before* he had declar'd himself openly to have come over into the Camp of the Unbelievers. Besides, is there any thing in our Christian Sacraments, like those idle *Superstitions*, by which the Devil beguiles Witches, and other simple People? Baptism is a *sober* and *ancient Rite*, which in all Ages out of mind, has been used, either for *Lustration*, or in Token of *Purgation from Sin*; or else to institute *Proselytes* into a new Religion. The *Sacrament of the Lord's-Supper*, is but a kind of Commemoration Feast, which was used among the *Jews*; and before the Institution of their Religion, there was something like it, among the Eucharistical Sacrifices of the Patriarchs. Now when our Christian Religion retains no more than these two very ancient and very sober Rites, they are very improperly called

led by you, and the *Socinians, Spells and Charms*: For they do, in my Mind, bear very little Analogy to the boiling together the Hair of a Wolf, and the Juice of Hemlock, and such other *diabolical Fooleries*, which Witches, or superstitious People use.

How Sacraments confer Grace. Well! But you may think them to be like Charms, because they are said to *confer Grace* to the Partakers of them. But you are under a Mistake, if you think that the Generality of Christians do own, that the Sacraments do confer Grace by a physical Power of their own, as the Heat of the Sun produces Plants, or warms us; or that Grace is *obtained*, as the *Papists* pretend, by the pure *Opus Operatum* of the Sacraments, by the *bare external receiving them*, without due Respect had to the *Worthiness*, or other *Qualifications* of the *Receivers*. For these are Fancies which we Protestants cannot agree to; for this Opinion would allow, that *Justification* would be the proper Effect of the Sacraments, which is only in Scripture attributed to *Faith* and *Holiness of Life*, when the Apostle expressly affirms, *That outward Baptism does not save us, but only the Answer of a good Conscience toward God*, 1 Pet. iii. 21.

Grace of Baptism.

But though this *Opinion* be erroneous, it does not follow, that no Grace at all is conferred in the Sacraments. Tho' they do not produce this Effect of themselves, or by their *bare sacramental Institution*, yet they may be made a Means of it, by the Assistance of God's holy Spirit, co-operating with them, and the Faith of *Believers*. And if we credit the *Holy Scriptures*, it must be plain to us, that by these *Sacraments*, we receive many supernatural Gifts of the *Holy Ghost*. Our Saviour tells *Nicodemus*, discoursing to him of Baptism, that *That which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit*, Joh. iii. 6. and joins all along together, the being *born again of Water, and the Spirit*. And so the Apostle, Tit. iii. 5. puts together *the Washing of Regeneration, and the Renewing of the Holy Ghost*. And so throughout the whole sixth Chapter of the *Romans*, he shews *the great Advantages, and spiritual Graces which we receive by Baptism, that being dead before,*

by

by this we may be enabled to walk in Newness of Life, v. 4. That the Body of Sin, by this, is destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve Sin, v. 6. And that by this we are dead unto Sin, and alive unto God, v. 11. By all which it is plain, that by the Sacrament of Baptism, we do receive such Advantage and Assistance of God's Holy Spirit, as may enable us to encounter with the Wiles and Malice of the Devil, with the strongest Temptations which the World or the Flesh can present us with, and with the greatest Difficulties we can meet with in our Christian Warfare. This was so conspicuous in the Primitive Times, that many of the *Heathen Proselytes* found in themselves an incredible Alteration upon receiving this Sacrament; their Souls were in a manner framed a-new, so that they seemed not to be the same Men they were before. Which makes *Laetantius* to glory thus of the Effects of Baptism. *Give us* (says he) *one that is unjust, foolish, and a Sinner, and in an Instant he shall be just, prudent, and innocent, with one Laver all his Wickedness shall be washed away.*

And so for the Sacrament of the *Lord's-Supper*, it is plain, that by this we obtain Forgiveness of Sins, which is sealed by this Sacrament. *This Cup* (says St. Luke xxii. 20.) *is the New Testament or Covenant in my Blood.* Or, as St. Matthew expresses it, *This is my Blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many, for the Remission of Sins.* By which it is plain, that Remission of Sins is received by partaking of this Sacrament; or else the Benefits of Christ's Blood are conveyed in it, which is the least that can be understood by the Words, *This is my Blood.* And many other great Effects of spiritual Grace, our Saviour (*Joh. vi.*) attributes to the eating and drinking his Body and Blood; that Men by this shall never Hunger, v. 35. *That this is for the Life of the World,* v. 51. That without this Men have no Life, v. 53. And again, *He that eateth my Flesh, and drinketh my Blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him,* v. 56. By which Expressions many of the Ancients thought, that the Elements in this Holy Sacrament were the *Seed*

of *Eternal Life*, in a proper Sense, and which would make the Bodies of *true Receivers* spring up again from the Dust. But, however, the least that can be understood by these Passages is, that God's Holy Spirit does, upon the due receiving the Holy Sacrament, convey to us extraordinary Graces and divine Assistances. And what Reason, indeed, is there to think otherwise? For if God has promised, to give his Holy Spirit to those that ask it, that he will provide us of Grace sufficient for us, even upon Account of our ordinary Prayers, why should we think he should not be inclined, to be more than ordinarily Liberal to our Requests, in that most solemn and intense Devotion, which he himself has particularly Instituted?

Phil. Next I except against your *Religion*, for proposing such an odd unconceivable Doctrine, as the *Resurrection of the Body*. It is contrary to all Rules of Philosophy and common Sense, that a Body, which has once submitted to natural Corruption, should again resume its pristine Form and Life. Nature then has neglected its *Ancient Work*, and is gone on to a new Draught of Operation; so that to produce the same Thing again, is as absurd as to recal Yesterday. Nay, what jejune and operose Labour does this impel upon the Deity, not to call it an Impossibility; to make him hunt out, throughout all the Universe, the dispersed Particles of dissolved Bodies, that are evaporated into the Air, tossed up and down in the Winds, dissolved in the Water, and rolled down Rivers? And how is it possible, that all Mens Bodies should arise again the same, when the same Matter has, in Succession of time, composed it may be half a Score? The same Herbage, which grows from the Corruption of Human Bodies, is turned into the Nourishment of Animals, which become the Food of other Men. But what shall Canibals do, who live upon one another? In this Case, at your Resurrection, one must want a Leg, and another an Arm, and some will hardly have a Finger left to themselves. Now this will make the Resurrection look more like a Surgeon's

geon's Shop, or an Hospital, than a Kingom of Glory. Indeed it may not want some Probability to say, that when the Soul shall leave this Body, it may again have, after a time, some other Body or Vehicle to move about in; but that it should be forced, to have the old rotten Particles picked up to be re-united to, is to me groundless and unconceivable Superstition.

Cred. It is the constant Fault of Men of your Persuasion, to disbelieve every thing that does, any Ways, contradict the ordinary Rules of Nature; but if Nature be not God, but God governs Nature, I do not see any Reason, but that God may dispose of Nature, and dispense with her ordinary Laws, as he thinks fit. There was a Time when Nature had none of these Laws, and, when God pleases, she may be dispossessed of them again. The present ordinary Laws of Nature, if they had been proposed to an intelligent Being, before the Creation of the World, when they did not actually exist, would have been altogether as shocking, even to an angelick Mind, as any thing in the Doctrine of the Resurrection is to ours. What could an angelick Nature, that had been acquainted with nothing but pure Spirit, think of a material World? What could such a simple Substance, that never knew any thing, but as uncompounded as it self, think of such a gross bulky Substance as Body? What Idea could it have of such a Being, which was it self Finite, and yet every Part thereof should be infinitely Divisible; that all those small *Somethings* which composed the whole Bulk of Matter, should be infinitely distant from *Nothing*? How amazing would it be to that *spiritual Being*, to consider the Nature of *corporeal Motion*; and, when it had been us'd only to intuitive Knowledge, how strange would be the Idea to it of bodily Sense? Or how could it imagine, that the first dark Lumps of Chaotick Matter, should ever be framed into the beautiful *Mechanism* of this *orderly World*? Most certainly, a witty *Angel*, if he had the usual Pride of our *Unbelievers*, could have made as many *Objections* against the Possibility and Reasonableness of the Resurrection.

Creation of a material World, as they do against the *Resurrection of a spiritual Body*; But notwithstanding these Things were above the Compass of the *Thoughts*, perhaps of the exalted *Angels*, yet *God Almighty* did make such a *Glorious Material World*; and since we Christians are sure, *God* has promised to raise such a *glorious Body* out of our *dead Ones*, we do stedfastly believe, he will *make good his Word*. If the thing be not absolutely impossible, there can be no Objection against it; for if it can be done, *God* has engaged his *Veracity*, that he will do it. But it is not impossible to be done, and therefore it will be done. It would be impossible for us, and difficult, it may be, to any other finite understanding, to gather together so many dispersed *Particles of Matter*, but it would be no *Difficulty* or *Operoseness* to the *Deity*, for in their present Confusion, they all lie as distinctly in his Knowledge, as if they were ranged into the most *methodical Order*. *God Almighty* preserves them every minute in their Being where-ever the lie; and to be sure, he that conserves them, knows them. So that *God* can, at the *last Summons*, with as great Facility bring those dispersed *Particles* together again, as he united them in their first *Production*. Nay, one may easily imagine, that *God*, if he pleased, might impress a kind of natural Force upon these dissolved Parts, to move to one another as readily as *homogeneous Metals* do in a *Chymist's Furnace*, or the Juices of the Earth, which are proper to nourish each Plant, are drawn together by it. What tho' we do not ordinarily behold a *Regress* to the *ancient Form* after a *Privation*, or that Things naturally do not return from Death to Life; must therefore *God* oblige himself, for ever, to the little Laws of this World. These *Rules of Nature*, are only a Scheme drawn for a *World of six or seven Thousand Years Continuance*; but after that, *God Almighty* strikes out new Lines of Providence, and prescribes to himself new Methods of *Operation*, the which are unknown to us now. And when you say, it is as impossible to revive such a *dead Body*, as to recal Yesterday, that is a great Mistake. For the Parts of Yesterday,

sterday are not in Being, but the Parts of a dead human Body are. All the Parts of Matter are still *permanent*, after their *Dissolution*; whilst Time consists in *Flux* or *Succession*, the former Part of which must have perished, before the latter has a Being. And 'tis to as little *Purpose*, that you object the *Food of Cannibals*, and the *interfering of one Man's Body with another*; for there is no one ever lived altogether upon Man's Flesh, and the very Liquids which are taken in with it, make no *inconsiderable Portion* of a *Cannibal's Body*. Besides, we do not know the Dimensions of the *spiritual Body*. That the *corrupted Particles* of the old one is the *Foundation* of it, is plain by Revelation; but that all the *gross Matter*, which they formerly partook of, shall be taken in again into the *angelick Body*, is not so certain. And tho' there should be a great deal of it lost by *Transmutation* from one Body to another; yet I am persuaded, there would be still abundantly enough remaining, to compose that *curious Isangelick Frame* of the *glorified Body*. Therefore, I don't see any Reason, why the *Socinians*, and their *Followers*, should gratify the *Infidels* so far, as to allow the *Resurrection of a Body*, in general only; when the Scripture speaks only of the same Body, and when the first Christians were reviled for believing the *Resurrection of the same Body*. For if no more was meant by their Faith, than the *Resurrection of a Body*, the *Heathens* might as well have exposed the *Pagan Divinity* of *Plato* and *Pythagoras*, who allow'd, That the Soul was again embodied after this Life; and the contumelious scattering the Ashes of the Christians Bodies into Rivers, was then no manner of *Exprobation* to the Christian Doctrine. Therefore, I say, when this is the Doctrine of the Scripture, and the constant Belief of the Christian Church, and is a thing so easy to conceive an infinite Being to do; I do not see why Men should fall into speculative, or fanciful Notions of a Resurrection, only because they may look a little more philosophical.

Phil. There is another Doctrine of your *Religion*, which I cannot so easily subscribe to, and that is, when you

you teach that there is a Devil, a certain great ^{*} malicious wicked Power which is the Adversary of God. Now 'tis not only very gross and irrational, but it is very impious to assert, that Almighty God being willing to do good to Men, is hindred from it by an Adversary. What! shall the Son of God be worsted by the Devil? These are strange contradictory Tales. If there were any Power, tho' never so great, that should stand in the Way of Omnipotence, the Almighty Power would crush it into Nothing; for what created Power can be compared to an infinite one? The whole united Power of Hell, and all your fancied Legions of Devils, would not be so considerable, if compared with that, as a swarm of Flies to Xerxes's Army.

Notion of a Devil all the World over.

Cred. You cannot pretend to expose the *Christian Notion* of a Devil, without taxing the *Opinion* of perhaps the whole World besides. The Ancients *Cacodemons, Furies, Mali Genij, &c.* were but the same Thing in other Words; and *Pluto*, the God of Hell, and Governor of infernal Spirits, is much the same with the scriptural *Satan, the Prince of Darkness*. The same Notion of a great powerful evil Spirit, was got among the old *Persians*, under the Name of *Arimanius*, and is still among the *Americans*, under the Name of *Codovangi*; the like is to be found in the *Theology* of the *Chinese*. From whence I conclude, that this is a Part of *ancient traditional Religion*, kept up among the diverse Nations of the World, and derived from the first *Progenitors of Mankind*; who, by the Unhappiness of their Fall, had especial Occasion very often to re-mind their Posterity of the wicked Cause of it.

Reasonable there should be wicked Spirits.

But why is the Character of a Devil so difficult to be believed? I can see no Reason, but why there may not be depraved or fallen Angels, as well as Men. If they have Free-will, as Men have, then they may abuse it, and that to the most wicked and pernicious Purposes, because of their extraordinary Knowledge. Because they know so much, since they want *Goodness*, they will be but the more arrogantly *Proud*; and that *Pride*, when they see

* Cels. apud Orig. p. 303.

themselves despised by God and good Angels, will render them *spightful* and *malicious*, and put them upon mischieving every thing which God has a liking to. These Effects are natural, and obvious to be seen in wicked Men of great Parts, who are slighted by their *Superiors*; but in fallen Angels such Malice will be much more refined, and truly devilish.

But you mistake, when you think that Christians own, that the Devil is such an Adversary of God, that God cannot easily defend himself from him. God might, if he pleased, annihilate the Prince of Darkness, with all his Adherents, or sink them a thousand Times deeper into Damnation than they are; neither do we think that his Wiles are so great, that he *circumvents*, or *over-reaches* *God Almighty*.

But though he *cannot* be too *cunning* for God, he may be so for Men; and God is not obliged to over-power Man's Will, when he does incline to the Suggestions of the Tempter; it is sufficient that God gives him Warning of the Danger from his Adversary, and affords him sufficient Portions of his Grace, but it is inconsistent with the Frame of *Human Nature*, that God should forcibly bend his Will to Good, to rescue him from the *Temptation*.

But further, there is no *Doubt* to be made, *but that* God does often make use of these little Artifices of the Devil, to the Ruin of his own wicked Purposes, to further his own all-wise Designs, which he is carrying on for the *Punishment of Sin*, and for the *Government of the World*. He suffers some Men to be *tempted into great Sins*, that sometimes they may be roused, by the Shame or Guilt of them, into *Repentance*; he makes one Man's Wickedness chastise *that of another*, and Occasions some to take Warning by the heinous Crimes which he permits others to fall into. And I doubt not, but in the last Winding up of Providence, it will be made appear, that the Devil's own mischievous Wickedness shall fall upon his own Pate; and those Wiles, by which he thought to defeat the Designs of God, shall only tend but to make himself the more miserable.

God over-rules his Wiles by his Providence.

A CONFERENCE

Phil. The *Notions* you Christians generally have of Hell, and everlasting Punishments, do likewise very much disgust me. For my Part, I look upon those idle Stories of Lakes of Fire and Brimstone, of a Worm that dies not, and Mens rolling about for ever in Rivers of Flame; to be only Bug-bear Tales of designing Men, and which serve to scare silly ones. Of these Stories, *Lucretius* has handsomely passed his Judgment formerly.

*Cerberus & Furie, tum vero & Lucis egenus,
Tartarus, horrificos eructans faucibus astus;
Qui neque sunt usquam nec possunt esse profecto.*

*Cerberus, Furies, and the gloomy Vault,
Of Tartarus, belching out those horrid Heats;
Things which are not, nor possibly can be.*

These are only the Result of Men's idle Fears, and superstitious Education.

Hinc Acherusia fit stultorum denique Vita.

Uneasy Guilt does make Men's Conscience groan,
And thus Fools come to dream of *Acheron*.

But to speak my Mind freely, I must needs own, that there is some Probability that the Soul should be in a Degree of Happiness, according to its virtuous Behaviour in this World; but those endless Punishments in merciless Flames, seem to impute such an uncompassionate Nature, and bowelles Cruelty to God Almighty, the best of Beings, as a charitable Man can hardly suppose of the worst. And therefore, methinks, the Reasoning of *Lucretius*, applied to this Purpose, is very just.

*Apparet Divum numen sedesque Quietæ,
Quas neque concutunt Venti, neque nubila nimbis
Aspergunt, neque nix acri concreta pruina
Cana cadens violat: semperque innubilus Æther
Integit, & largè diffuso lumine ridet:
Sed contr. i. nusquam apparent Acherusia Templa.*

The

The Gods we see, and Heavens peaceful Towers,
 Vext by no ruffling Winds, or stormy Showers :
 No Frost, no Snow, disturbs the happy Soil,
 No lowring Clouds the glorious Day defile,
 But the pure Sky around with Light does smile :
 These Things we see, but then no mortal Eye,
 The Acherusian Temples can descry.

God is too good to create any *Creature*, which he will let be eternally miserable ; and he is too *just*, to punish a slight temporary *Sin* with an eternal *Punishment*. All his *Penalties* are graciously design'd to make Men better ; but no Man can be better'd, by being infinitely tormented.

Cred. It is none of my *Design* to vindicate the old *My-* Heathens
Notion of
Hell came
rather from
Tradition *thological Stories* about *Tartarus*, or *Hell*, where *wicked Souls* were supposed to be *punished* ; though, *I doubt not*, but there was *some Truth* in the *Bottom of them*, and that they were grounded upon some *old Revelation*, handed down from the *Time of the first Patriarchs*, and not owing to Mens *Fears* or *groundless Superstitions*. For I look upon *Conscience*, or *Fear of future Punishments*, to be a *good Argument*, that there are such *future Punishments*, which all Men do fear ; but I don't see any Reason why *Fear alone* should give them a *Being*,

For what all Men fear, they have *Reason to fear* ; for though a great many Men are led by *Humour* and *Fancy*, yet what all Men do, must have a *Foundation in Nature*, or *sound Reason*.

Neither have you any *Reason to find Fault with the Christian Description of Hell by Fire and Brimstone, &c.* For these *Expressions* may, for ought we know, be only *mep-* Some of the
Scripture
Descriptions
of Hell me-
taphorical. *taphorical* ; and *Hell* being a most *dreadful Place*, the *Torments* whereof being unknown, and wanting a Name, they could not be better illustrated than by the most *horrid Pains*, which we are acquainted with. Though there is *nothing unreasonable*, if we take these Expressions in their *literal Sense*. For since the *Bodies* of wicked Men are to be *punished in Hell*, as well as their *Souls*, there is *nothing more suitable* to produce a *most raging Pain in them*.

them, than *Fire and Brimstone*. And the *Dissolution of the Earth* being to attend the future *Judgment*, it is not improbable that the burning of the *Nitro-sulphureous Earth* may be a *local Hell*.

Eternity of Hell Torments vindicated. But as you object against an *eternal Punishment*; That it would be *unmerciful and unjust*; when you consider these Matters aright, you will own, that the *Justice and Mercy of God* may be sufficiently vindicated in this Particular. For tho' *Mercy* be one of the *Attributes of God*, yet his *Wisdom* and *Justice* are so too; and his *Mercy* cannot in Reason spare, when his *Wisdom* and *Justice* direct him to punish. So that the whole *Question* depends upon this, *Whether it be reasonable for God to entail an Eternity of Torments for the Punishment of temporary Sin?* And I answer that he may, for these *Reasons*:

1. Because it is not requisite that the Punishment which is forewarned, should always be proportioned to the *Guilt*. For it is very just in a *Legislator* oftentimes to make very severe Laws against *slight Crimes*, especially when the *Offenders* grow *numerous* and *insolent*. Now when we see that Sinners are so bold and daring, that they will venture upon Sin, when an *Infinity of Punishment* is denounced against it; can you think it *reasonable* that God should have been obliged to have made the *Punishment* less severe, thereby to have given wicked Men the *Opportunity* to be more impudent. Indeed the Case had not been the same, if God had not given Warning of the *Grievousness* of the *Punishment*; but when Men know beforehand what they must trust to upon their *Disobedience*, it is no Injustice in God to inflict the Severity of his Laws, when it lay in Mens Power to have avoided it. And besides, that which makes such a severe Legislation the more reasonable, is, that God has annexed an *Eternity of Reward* to the *Obedience* of his *Laws*, as he has an *Eternity of Misery* to the *Disobedience*; so that the *Infinity* on one Side, does as much exceed all *Pretence of Proportion*, as on the other; and Man has a *Free-will* to take either *Choice*: So that upon the whole, 'tis his

own

own Folly, and not God's Justice, that is to be blamed if he takes the Wrong.

2. I shall omit the *Argument* of the *Schools* for the *Eternity of Torments*, upon account that the Sins which they punish, are against an *infinite Dignity*, (though there is more in that Argument than the *Socinians* will allow:) and shall ground the Justice of God, in this Proceeding, upon the natural Miserableness of Sin. God Almighty has fixed eternal Laws, that Virtue shall naturally tend to Happiness, and Vice to Misery. And whereas the Soul is naturally Immortal, as long as it carries its Vice with it, it will be miserable. There is no Time of *Purgation* from *Vice* but in this World, through the Merits of Christ, and the Benefits of the Gospel; and therefore a Soul that goes out of it unregenerate, is miserable for ever. It would be eternally miserable, if upon no other Account, but because it will feel eternal Remorses for Sin, and everlasting Regret the Loss of an infinite Happiness. But yet further, suppose that God, upon the Creation of the World, fixed settled Laws of his Providence in Relation to Rewards and Punishments of Virtue and Vice, wherein he has determined, that Sin should carry Men as naturally to such Punishments, as frequent Debauchees into Distempers and Indisposition of Body; where would be the Injustice of God, to let Men for ever suffer the Effects which their Wickedness had brought them into? If you by Intemperance had ruin'd the Constitution of your Body, do you think that God Almighty's Justice, or Mercy, is concern'd to rectify it again by a Miracle? God Almighty's Mercy and Goodness were signalized enough in giving you a sound Constitution at first, which it was in your Power to have kept, if you had lived as you ought to have done; but it is no manner of Injustice in God, if he then suffers your Body to remain sickly as long as it does continue in Being.

Now whereas God is not obliged to supersede his natural Laws, in miraculously making a Body well, which has made it self sickly; so the Case is the same in Relation

to those Laws and Methods of Providence, which are laid down as to Men's Souls. Vice can only naturally throw the Body into Indisposition till Death ; but the Soul being naturally Immortal, must be eternally indisposed by the same Laws. 'Tis one Scheme of God's Providence, that extravagant Intemperance shall make Men sickly for a mortal Life ; and it is another providential Determination, that Vice, without a due Repentance, shall make Men miserable for an eternal Life. And therefore, whereas the Order of Providence is, suppose, for Illustration sake, thus, That this World shall continue six thousand Years, and afterwards is to be burnt up, and to continue for ever in Flames of Fire, which may be, for ought I know, the local Hell ; that Men, by living a Course of Virtue, and by squaring their Lives according to the Rules of the Religion which God has prescribed, may get rid from the Miseries of this burning World, and may be possessed of a blissful State in another ; where is the Injustice of God, if he does not miraculously alter these Methods of his Providence, out of Tenderness to Men, who would not procure their own Happiness, by the ordinary Methods he prescribed to them ? As God is not obliged to alter the Laws of Sanity, to make the sickly Man better, but that naturally he must continue under those Indispositions as long as he lives here ; so neither is God obliged to make an Alteration in this other providential Dispensations of another Life ; but the Soul must take its most miserable Lot there, which by its own Fault, it has plunged it self into.

3. And as to what you say as to God's Punishment only to make Men *better*; I do not take this to be any Objection against an *Eternity of Torments*. For tho' God does generally punish Men in order to make them *better*, he does this only so long, as they are capable of being made *better*: For when they become incorrigible, this End must cease. Now, 'tis true, that in this World God sends his *Chastisements* and *Afflictions* to this very purpose, thereby to make us *better*; because this World is a State of *Trial or Probation*, but in the other World, the State of

of Things are changed, and the Time of Probation is over; God has tried Men till they have plainly appeared incorrigible, and that 'tis to no Purpose to try them longer.

And therefore the End of his punishing Men must be then, to display the infinite Integrity of his Justice and Holiness, and to shew that it is contrary to the Rectitude of his *Nature*, to let Sin go unpunished. Not but that God's Goodness and Mercy had a Share here too; for, by this dreadful Punishment of incorrigible Offenders, he to all *Eternity* gives Examples of his Vengeance in punishing Sin, and Rebellion against God; thereby to engage all his Creatures to a more hearty Love of God, and to a more ready fulfilling his Will for ever.

Phil. My last Exception is against your Christian Doctrine of *Heaven**, where you tell us, that Men must be rewarded for their good Actions in a fine glorious Place, no Body knows where. But these are fond Nations fitted only for vulgar and mercenary People, who will do no *good*, but when they are hired to it. But the generously Virtuous are they, who are Virtuous for Virtue's sake; they who choose to do good, because it is brave and honourable, and not because they think they shall get by it. Therefore, methinks, our *Deist's* Religion is much preferable to yours, because it makes Men Virtuous upon a more generous Principle, than any that is to be found in your Religion, which encourages Men to Virtue only, in Hopes of being rewarded for it.

Cred. There is nothing in the *Christian Doctrine of Heaven*, and the *Glories* of another World, but what is very sober and rational, and agreeable to the wisest Thought. We are taught by our Religion, that we shall there enjoy eternal Life, which is but very consonant to a *State of Glory*, which a frail Mortality would fully; that we shall be cloathed with a *glorious* and *in-*

* *Oracles of Reason*, p. 122. *Spinoza Eth.* par. 5. prop. 42.

corruptible Body; whose Principle shall not be a *living* or animal *Soul*, but a *quickening Spirit*, 1 Cor. xv. 45 & 49. (*i. e.*) not a living Soul wanting Nourishment as in this World; but such a quickening Spirit as shall convey Life without being beholding to eating and drinking for it. What wiser Description can there be of a *State of Glory*, than to represent it a Vacancy from all Pain and Dissatisfaction, *When God shall wipe all Tears from our Eyes, when there shall be no more Death or Sorrow of Crying, neither shall there be any more Pain*, Rev. xxi. 4. And that the Height of Fruition shall be, in the Vision of God? *Blessed are the pure in Heart for they shall see God. We shall see him as he is*, 1 Joh. iii. 2. This is a true rational Account of future Happiness, such as is worthy of God, and is not like the idle Dreams of a Pagan Elysium, or the Paradise of the *Alchoran*, or the *Talmud*.

But to speak a Word or two in Answer to your taxing us with Want of Generosity, in doing good for the Hopes of Heaven. Now, for my Part, I cannot see but that it is altogether as generous, to do good for God's sake, as for Virtue's sake. For what is Virtue abstracted from God and Religion, but only an empty Name? He that does good for God's sake, or because God has commanded him, does it most certainly for Virtue's sake too; that is, because it is agreeable to the truest Reason, for we are sure that God commands nothing but what is wise and good. Oh! But we have an Eye upon our own Happiness likewise when we do it, and therefore we do not do good for Virtue's sake. I can understand nothing by your doing Good for *Virtue's sake*, but only the doing a Thing because it is wise and rational; now what can be more wise and rational, than in all our Actions to have an Eye to our chief Good; which, if we neglect, we act neither wisely, nor rationally? We act wisely and rationally, when we are charitable to our Neighbour, and are beneficent to our Friends, because our Reason tells us, that we were not

born

born for our selves, but that we ought to contribute our Assistance, as far as we can, and do all possible good in our Generation.

And is it not likewise very wise and rational to provide for our own Happiness too in another World, by duly worshiping God, and doing as he has commanded us? To act only for the good of others, and desperately to neglect ourselves, is Madness and Folly, and not to act for Virtue's Sake, or agreeably to Reason. For the truest Reason tells us, that we ought to consult our own Happiness, when it is not Prejudicial to others, and when the desire of it does not degenerate into Selfishness, or a vicious Self-Love. For Reason tells us, that God has not implanted this Principle of Self-preservation, or Self-love, in us for nothing; and therefore, we must conclude, that we act very rationally, when we act in order to our own chief Happiness, which can be in no wise Prejudicial to that of other Mens. Now this is the truest Way of virtuous or rational Action, because it is to act agreeable to the Reason of God. But your way of acting, according to Virtue or Reason, as you call it, is oftentimes according to Fancy, or the whimsical Reasoning of some *Opiniators*, who are continually advancing new *Hypotheses* in *Morality*; as well as in *Phyicks*, and drawing new Schemes of Virtue or Vice, as their Spleen directs them. This is not to follow Reason, or to act for Virtue's sake; but 'tis to dance after all the *Ignes Fatui* of a speculative Brain.

But, after all, what is this great Pretence of these Set of Men to act for Virtue's sake, which is so brave and generous? Why, it is only to do a reputable Action to be admired and praised, which is nothing else but unregenerate Pride. Such Men will rarely do a good Action in the dark, which is like to come to no one's Knowledge; or if they do, it is with such a sort of inward Haughtiness, as spoils all the Goodness of it.

Therefore, pray *Philologus*, leave off all these Heathen Principles, which are good for nothing, but to

make Men insolent and contemptuous; and learn to do Good for God's sake, and your own Soul's sake; and this will make you better and happier, than a few empty glittering Notions of the Bravery of Virtue, which the Philosophers of old, for lack of Revelation, were forced to content themselves with.

Phil. I am sorry we cannot make an end of our Conference this Morning, for Dinner-time comes on; and I must bespeak your Company, good Sir, to take a Dish of Meat with me to Day, and after Dinner we may dispatch that Part of our Dispute which remains behind.

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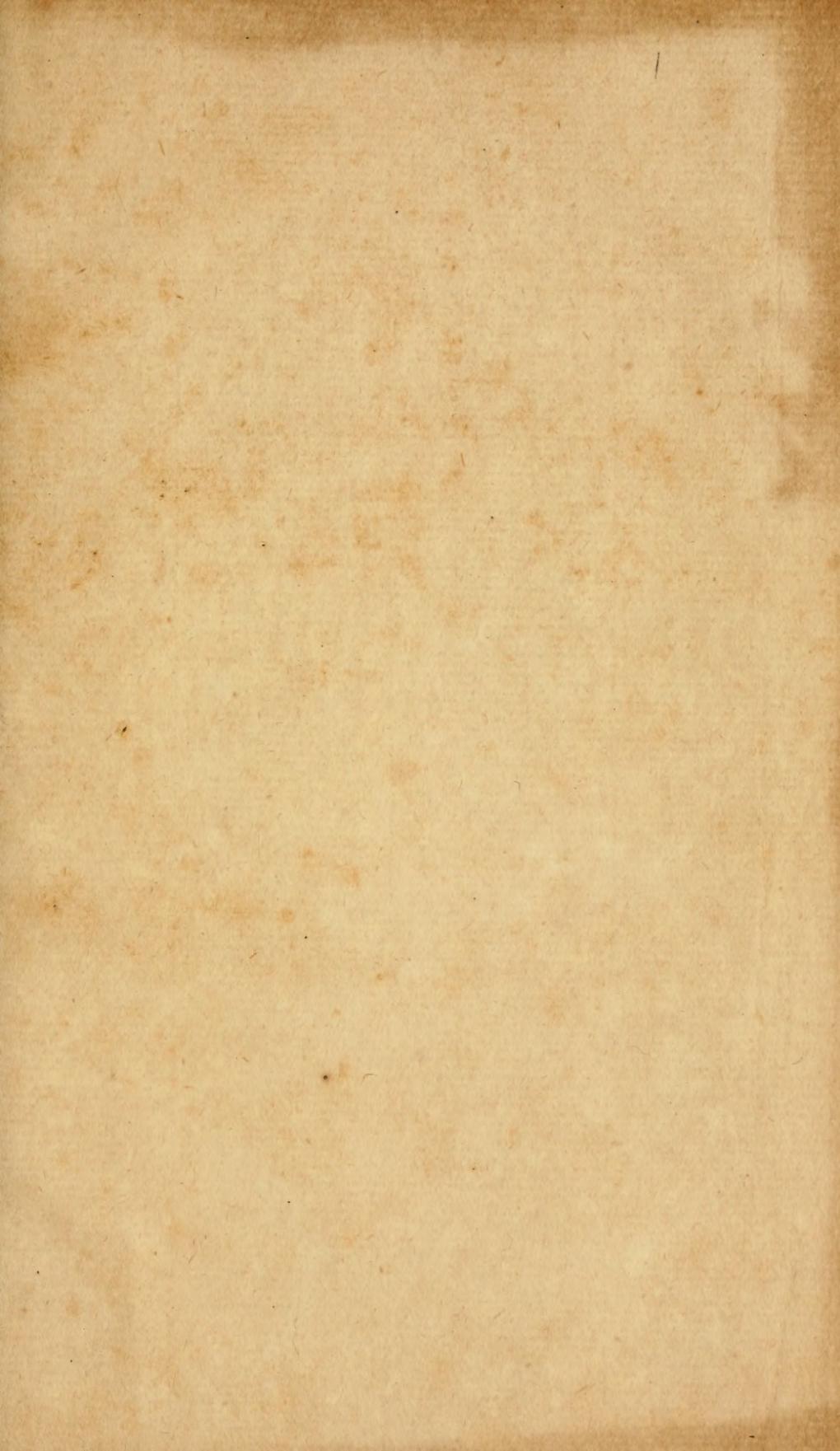
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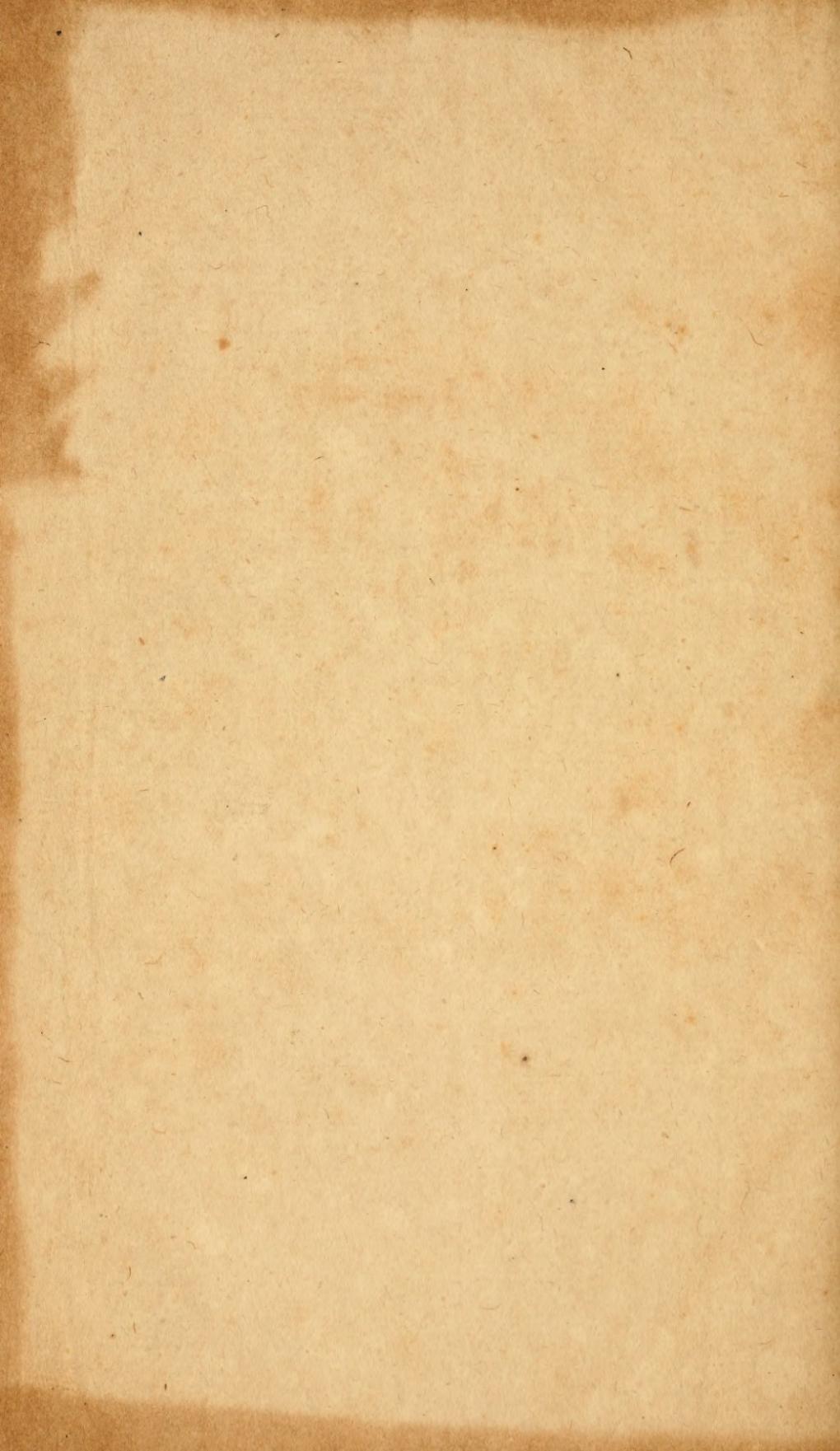
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